

# THE INTERLOPERS



JULIE M. LIPPMANN

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“WHAT A HOSTILE LITTLE ENEMY”

# THE INTERLOPERS

BY  
JULIE M. LIPPMANN

*Author of*  
"MARTHA-BY-THE-DAY," "THE GOVERNESS," ETC.

*Illustrated by*  
RALPH P. COLEMAN

W. CLELLAND, GOODCHILD & STEWART  
(LIMITED)  
TORONTO  
1917



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The Interlopers

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## CONTENTS

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CHAP.		PAGE
I	DOROTHY'S DILEMMA . . . . .	7
II	BEARING IT . . . . .	21
III	READY FOR FUN . . . . .	38
IV	MISS JENKINS . . . . .	54
V	CAT'S-PAWS . . . . .	67
VI	COMMENCEMENT . . . . .	88
VII	THE INTERLOPER . . . . .	106
VIII	THE JOURNEY . . . . .	118
IX	HOME . . . . .	136
X	TALKING THINGS OVER . . . . .	153
XI	DOROTHY'S CHAMPION . . . . .	168
XII	A SURPRISE . . . . .	182
XIII	AN EXCITING RIDE . . . . .	197
XIV	AT MRS. MALBY'S . . . . .	215
XV	RAINY DAYS . . . . .	229
XVI	KILLING TIME . . . . .	245
XVII	HELEN'S DRESS . . . . .	262
XVIII	FOR CHARITY'S SAKE . . . . .	276
XIX	HARD-EARNED GOLD . . . . .	291
XX	WHY DOROTHY WAS GLAD . . . . .	308





## ILLUSTRATIONS

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	PAGE
"What a Hostile Little Enemy" .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"I Must Get It" . . . . .	85
"The Family Is a Very Old One" . . . . .	179
There Were Three of Them . . . . .	236
"I'm Glad I'm Alive" . . . . .	289

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## CHAPTER I

### DOROTHY'S DILEMMA

It was a bright, warm May morning, and the windows of the school-room were all open. Through them came the faint smell of far-away lilacs blooming beside the seminary fence, and the hum of near bees bumping against the seminary wall. All this sweetness and light made the girl students "wild to get out," as they would express it, but they had, perforce, to content themselves with glances into the open from behind irritating book covers.

From a recitation-room beyond came the monotonous sound of a voice explaining a problem in algebra, while from an apartment more distant still were heard the notes of a badly executed scale.

Here in Miss Lorimer's room all was com-

paratively still. The girls were supposed to be studying.

Suddenly the door opened, and a strong draught of mild air sprung toward it from the windows, setting the loose rings of hair on the temples of the new-comer flying as she stood for a second upon the doorsill before entering the room.

She seemed sorry to close herself in again by the shutting of that door to the weary round of study that for a little while she had escaped. At her appearance Miss Lorimer raised her eyes from the pages of a composition she was correcting and looked at the girl.

"You have been gone a long time, Dorothy," she said in a low tone of disapprobation. "When you asked for permission to leave the room I did not suppose you intended to remain away throughout the morning session. You will scarcely have time to study your Roman history lesson now before the noon intermission, but I will take no excuse if you are not prepared."

Dorothy made no response, and threaded her way slowly along the aisles to her desk, where she began a determined attack upon the im-

prisoned Caius Marius, whose doings formed the subject of the afternoon's lesson.

The lilacs wafted their scent to the winds; the bees hummed on, and the sun climbed slowly upward toward the zenith. Having gained this position it gave direct, vertical evidence thereof to the world at large and to the seminary in particular; whereupon Dennis, the janitor, sounded the gong and the classes dispersed for recess.

As soon as Miss Lorimer left the room the girls all crowded about Dorothy with anxious inquiries and excited demands.

"Did you really do it?"

"And got them through?"

"How dared you?"

"Were you scared?"

"Of course I did it. Do you think I'd back out—at the last minute, too? I got them safe through, though it was a squeeze, I tell you; and I almost got stuck myself."

"Oh, Dorothy!"

"I declare, I think it's a shame to put a fascinating window just at the right height in the cloak-room, where one can easily climb up and see into the hall, and then insist on mak-

ing it so small that it pinches one all over, black and blue, when one crawls through to skip out by the big front door and smuggle in cakes and pie!"

"Was the apple-woman there?"

"Yes. Do you know, girls, that woman is a seraph! She was just where I told her to be and everything went on like clock-work. Wait till to-night, and we'll have a time! Four enormous pies—a little crushed from being bundled up together, but that's no matter—and a lot of cakes; spice and otherwise, as Miss Lorimer would say."

The girls received Dorothy's announcements of the delights to come with little sighs of appreciation, so expressive that one who was not acquainted with the bounteousness of the seminary table might have imagined that the institution starved its pupils.

As a matter of fact the girls' sole motive was a notion of "fun" and the fascination of bringing something from the outside world. Of course the doer of the doughty deed must be Dorothy. Whenever there was any mischief afloat it was always directly traceable to Dorothy.

It was a good trait in this girl that if she did any mischief she never tried to shift the responsibility upon another. She took the blame of failure just as she enjoyed the triumph of success.

Miss Lorimer thought she ought by this time to show a more dignified bearing. She was no longer a child. But alas! Dorothy was not of the same opinion. Miss Lorimer often thought that she would write to Mrs. Day and ask her to remonstrate with her little daughter. But she refrained because none of Dorothy's fun was malicious, and because Mrs. Day was traveling abroad, and she felt it was not best to cause her distress while Dorothy did not transgress too far.

"You see," Miss Lorimer explained to Miss Duprée, the principal, "things always look so different on paper—so uncompromising and downright. Mrs. Day might imagine the child was doing some real evil, whereas she is only mischievous and full of animal spirits. If she had a father perhaps he could govern her; but the little tom-boy is too much for her mother, I fancy."

Miss Lorimer shook her head regretfully as she turned into the corridor leading to her own room

to read, undisturbed, some letters that had just arrived.

She had scarcely finished the first brief note when she heard a knock upon her door, and was informed that Miss Duprée would be obliged if Miss Lorimer could spare her a few moments, as she had just received a piece of news which she wished to communicate to her.

Miss Lorimer hastened to the principal's room and was greeted by an amused laugh and a gesture of welcome.

"Do sit down and listen to this," said Miss Duprée. "A few moments ago you were lamenting Dorothy Day's fatherless condition. I have just received a letter from Mrs. Day announcing her marriage and begging me to break the news to Dorothy, after which I may give her this little note that was enclosed in mine."

Miss Lorimer knit her brows. "What will the child do?" she murmured.

"What shall I do?" interposed Miss Duprée. "I can't talk to her; I see so little of her that I should not know how to handle her in this affair. You would be much better able to judge how she will accept it. Suppose you explain it to her. How do you think she will take it?"



"I think she will resent it bitterly. I am sorry. I wish it need not have been, and especially that I were not to be the one to tell her. She adores her mother, and, I think, is very jealous of her love. Does Mrs. Day give any particulars, or tell you what her plans are?"

"No; nothing further than that she intends to return to America in June—just about commencement time—and I suppose Dorothy will then be taken home and permitted to see how she likes her new father."

"She is high-spirited," said Miss Lorimer. "It is an unpleasant task."

With the two letters from abroad in her hand she passed out of the door. As she neared her own recitation-room she heard from within the sounds of light laughter and gay voices.

"Do it again, Dorothy, it's perfectly lovely!"

"Go on, hurry; if you don't the bell will ring!"

"Once more, Dorothy, just once!"

Through the half-open door Miss Lorimer witnessed a strange sight. Dorothy Day dancing a spirited "clog," while the girls stood about her in an admiring circle, patting their hands to keep time with the tap of her daintily-

shod feet and giggling ecstatically as she wound up with the difficult rhythm of the plantation "rag-chorus."

Miss Lorimer waited a moment, but only a moment, and then pushed open the door and stood upon the threshold.

"Dorothy!"

The girls all turned away and Dorothy stood alone, the color suddenly fading out of her cheeks and the flashing light from her eyes. She was abashed and silent.

"Dorothy," said the teacher, quietly, "will you be good enough to come to my room at once?"

She turned her back and was gone.

"Phew!" said one. "Now you're in for it!"

Another approached her and took her hand. "If you like, I'll go up with you," she said, staunchly.

But Dorothy, thanking her with a look, shook herself together, smoothed back her ruffled hair, and followed Miss Lorimer. In a moment she was standing before her, awaiting her doom.

But all Miss Lorimer said was: "Will you please close the door, Dorothy? I have something to tell you."

Then she made known to her as gently as she could the contents of her mother's letter.

Dorothy grew very white, even to the lips, and her chin trembled. Miss Lorimer made a pretense of seeing nothing but the letter she held in her hand, at which she looked with downcast eyes.

For a moment there was no sound in the little room but the ticking of the clock upon the mantel-shelf. Then Dorothy sprang suddenly to her feet, and in a choked voice, husky and trembling with indignation, cried:

"And she did it without telling me! I never knew—all this—time! Oh, it was—mean, it was—"

She gave a pitiful little gasp, and then began to cry.

"Please let me go to my room, Miss Lorimer," she begged. "I can't go to recitation again—to-day. I don't care, I—want to—be alone."

Miss Lorimer rose and put both arms about the girl's swaying figure.

"You shall be alone, dear," she said. "But before you go I want to give you a letter your mother enclosed in this to Miss Duprée. It may

contain some comforting words. And believe me, my dear, there is nothing to grieve about. Your mother's love for her husband does not deprive you of one jot of her affection for you; and if she is happy—"

She paused and stroked the bent head tenderly with her hand.

The clang of a gong sounded through the building. Miss Limer thrust the envelope into Dorothy's hand, and, pressing her lips to her forehead, whispered:

"Here is your letter, dear. Read it, and try to be happy. Don't judge your mother—that is, don't misjudge her. Stay here if you like, and as soon as I can I will come to you. It will not be long."

When she was gone Dorothy dried her eyes with little savage thrusts of her handkerchief, and tore open her letter and read.

There were some kind and tender passages in which her mother announced her marriage to Colonel Everest, and then this, which caused Dorothy's eyes to snap, and at last her hand to fling the letter across the room:

"He is so good, and more than kind, and we are a very fortunate mamma and daughter,

Dorothy, to have such a faithful friend to care for us always.

"And now for a piece of news that I did not write to Miss Duprée: Colonel Everest has a little daughter just about your age—a year older, perhaps—and just fancy! this poor child has never known a mother, for hers died when Helen was born, and ever since her babyhood she has been separated from her father.

"So now she is so happy that she clings about my neck, kissing my cheek and calling me 'mamma,' and now and then really crying at the thought of never being lonely any more.

"She follows her father and me about with her great wistful eyes that look as if they had grown big through longing for something to love, until I feel the tears come gushing up into my own at the remembrance of my Dorothy's 'bonny blue een' and the thought of how different her life has been.

Helen has looked at your picture until she knows your face by heart, and is so anxious to see you that every day she says: 'Now it is nearer the time when we shall go to Dorothy.' What good mates you two little sisters will be!

"Be good and true and faithful and just

always, and remember that nothing can alter the devoted love of your affectionate mamma!"

So it was even worse than she had expected! Not alone had this strange man come and stolen her mother from her, but he had thrust his daughter between them, too. It was cruel! cruel! Another girl clinging to her mother's neck, and calling her mother, and taking her place in her mother's heart, while she, Dorothy, was alone among strangers!

Why—her mother say she loved her when she was willing to bring strange people between them—strange people whom Dorothy had never seen nor heard of before, and who were now at this moment taking the place that by right belonged to her?

She put her heel on the letter that had made her heart ache, and ground it down upon the floor. She felt a fierce hatred toward these people, and a feeling of bitter resentment against the mother who, as she thought of it, could let herself be cajoled into deserting her own child in order to take into her heart a strange man and his strange daughter.

What could she do? If she were grown up she would go away and earn her own living,

somewhere in Turkey, perhaps, as a missionary, and then her mother could have this Helen all to herself, and she would be out of the way. No doubt it would please these strange people immensely.

The poor child lashed herself with her own imaginings until she was choked and blinded with grief. Somewhere in her side she felt a dull ache. That was her heart. Well, perhaps she would get heart-disease! She fancied herself dead of a broken heart, and her mother hurrying across the ocean to look upon her for the last time. Then she would be sorry she had ever married a strange man and his miserable girl, and wish she had never made her own child so unhappy!

She was so thoroughly wretched that she did not notice how the hours sped, and was surprised, in a dull, listless fashion, when Miss Lorimer returned and found her still crying. She was proud enough to wish to hide her grief from an outsider, and loyal enough to desire to shield her mother from the censure of others.

So she made a great effort to control herself and appear composed, while her swollen eyes

and the grievous droop of her mouth made her endeavor quite touching.

Miss Lorimer went to the child, and gently lifting her from the chair in which she sat, drew her upon her lap, waiting patiently for her to check the heavy sobs that would come in spite of herself. At last when Dorothy's breathing had become more regular, Miss Lorimer began to talk to her in tones which soothed her into a condition of comparative quiet.

It did not surprise her—the child was too much worn out to feel much emotion of any sort just now—to find Miss Lorimer took quite a different view of the case from that which she herself held.

Her teacher told her it was only natural and right that her mother should marry again, and that if Colonel Everest were a good man, and she was sure he was, it would prove a great blessing instead of a misfortune to his young step-daughter.

She said many things that Dorothy seemed to hear and still not appreciate at all, they were so different from her own way of thinking; but she said nothing in contradiction, and Miss Lorimer felt she had won her over and that there would be no further trouble.



## CHAPTER II

### BEARING IT

DOROTHY slept heavily that night. She was worn out with crying, and when she woke the next morning her eyes were swollen and smarting. She flung on her garments hastily, for she had chosen to lie still for some minutes after the rising-bell had rung, and that considerably curtailed her dressing-time. She dreaded going down-stairs and meeting all the girls, for she felt sure they would cross-question her, and as she gave her hair a few hasty dabs with the brush, she prepared in her own mind the retort she would make if any one ventured to address her on the subject of her news of the day before. She did not feel in the least like crying now. She was perfectly self-possessed, but moody and inwardly wretched.

Miss Lorimer smothered a pitying smile in her napkin as the girl marched into the dining-room and took her place sullenly at the long,

cheery breakfast-table; her face was dark as a thunder-cloud and she was in every way so different from her usual sunny self.

"I'm afraid she's a little fair-weather body," thought the teacher compassionately. "Poor child! if she only matches her temper to the happy days I fear she'll have some bitter hours before she is done."

But to the girl herself she said nothing, and the breakfast went on as usual, with the exception of Dorothy's laugh, which was generally to be heard bubbling up irrepressibly on the slightest provocation, and to-day was conspicuous by its absence.

"Oh, Dorothy!" whispered her next-door neighbor, under cover of the general uprising, "is it true that your mother has gone and got married? Fanny Bergen says that she was passing Miss Duprée's door and she heard her say so to Miss Jenkins. Is it true?"

Dorothy shot a withering glance at her. "None of your business," she retorted savagely, and stalked off scowling to her desk.

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed her crest-fallen companion, indignantly. "I guess she'll wait one while before I speak to her again."

There was no gay nodding across the aisles on Dorothy's side this morning; no mischievous, forbidden "communicating." She sat at her desk, both elbows planted squarely upon the top, her palms propping her forehead, her thumbs stopping her ears, and "studied like a house on fire."

She was letter-perfect in all her recitations, but Miss Lorimer thought she almost would have preferred a little less faultlessness if it could have been accompanied by a more cheerful expression.

She spent the noon intermission in her room, and after school hours paraded about the grounds in stately silence until the period for out-door exercise was over. The girls watched her for a while with inquisitive interest and then went their own ways, and, if they did not forget her, at least did not intrude upon her, so that by evening Dorothy had had about as much of solitude and moping as she desired, and was quite ready to join in the old recreations again and get as much fun as she could out of what seemed to her this very cruel world. After all, the girls weren't to blame because her mother had deserted her. No, the girls were

her best friends now—her only friends, and she must try to make the most of them.

It was a great disappointment to her to find that the cakes and pie she had smuggled in at such pains had been heartlessly eaten away the night before—eaten away to the last crumb when she was suffering and mournful and alone.

"I think you might at least have offered me some," she grumbled crossly to Marie Pollock, who had come to her room just at twilight, and was now sitting perched on the bed before her.

"Why, Dorothy, don't you remember?" exclaimed Marie, gently. "I did come to your door and you wouldn't let me in. I rapped as loud as I dared, and you didn't answer a word. I'd saved the best for you, too."

"I guess I must have been asleep," admitted Dorothy, lamely. "Well, did you eat 'em? Were they good?"

"Just delicious! I never tasted anything better. And once we thought we heard Miss Duprée, but it was only a rat or something, and I tell you we hustled the basket under the bed. Kate Van Voochries got laughing so I thought she'd wake the house."

"She's an awful goose!" declared Dorothy, sternly. "I wouldn't mind if she giggled when things were funny, but she keeps it up no matter what happens, and some time she'll get us into a scrape—now you see if she doesn't."

"Dear me, I hope not!" cried Marie. "We've got through the year so smoothly, and now if she upsets our kettle of fish just at the last minute it will be dreadful. Can you realize we've only one month more? Commencement is four weeks from Wednesday! What are you going to wear?"

Dorothy's face clouded. "I don't know," she responded slowly. "I have my white organdie from last summer. I s'pose I might wear that. But I don't want to a bit. You've all seen it, and the skirt was only just below my knees last August. I wish I had something else, spick and span new."

"Why don't you write to your mother and ask?" suggested Marie. "She could have one made for you just as mamma is for me. I got Miss Lorimer to take my measure the other day, and the dress is being made from that. It's quite easy."

Dorothy gazed out of the window in silence.

Then she drummed a tune on the sill with her finger-nail. The truth was that she had already written to her mother on the subject, and the word that had come back was simply :

"I'm deeply sorry, my little daughter, but I cannot afford it. You must make the organdie do. It is fresh and pretty, and could be lengthened in the skirt by letting out the tuck behind the hem. You know we made it that way purposely, allowing for your growth. I wish I might send you a pretty new frock ; but when you begged so hard last summer for the organdie I told you it would have to serve for two seasons. We cannot afford to be extravagant, dear child."

Dorothy knew her mother well enough to be certain that that settled the question.

"If your mother was willing," continued Marie, kindly, "I'm sure mamma would see to it for you, and Miss Lorimer would be only too glad to take your measure just as she did mine. She's awfully kind and obliging. She came in when I was trying to show Hannah how (it was a job, I tell you, considering I didn't know the way of it myself), and she took the tape right out of Hannah's hand, and that was the end of

my bother. Why don't you write to your mother and ask if she's willing."

Dorothy drummed on in silence for a second. "Perhaps I will," she said, non-committally. Write to her mother! She had quite made up her mind last night that she would never write to her mother any more. She had told herself that strangers had usurped her place in her mother's heart, and that, therefore, it did not matter what she did or did not do in the future—her mother would not care. But now she suddenly felt a strange longing to write to her; to pour out her whole heart, and make a clean breast of everything, just as she had been used to do in the old days when her mother had taken her in her arms, listened to all her troubles and contrition, and had comforted her at last with wise words of counsel and a kiss of forgiveness.

As soon as Marie had left the room Dorothy ran to her desk and began rummaging through it for her steamer-paper and foreign stamps. She had to search a long time before they came to light, and then, somehow, her mood had changed.

"I can't ever tell her anything again," she mused, bitterly; "for, of course, the first thing

she'll do will be to run and tell him, and then he'll laugh and make fun of me, or else he'll say, 'I wish, Dorothy, you were like Helen! Helen is a ve-ry supe-rior girl! She never does anything wrong! She'd be ashamed to act as you do!' No, I'll have to shut my lips tight and never say a word; for do you suppose I want those people to know about everything that goes on in my mind? One's mother is different, but one doesn't want strange men and girls prying into one's thoughts and making fun of them. But I'll have to write to her—oh, yes, of course. It would be very rude not to, and he sha'n't think I haven't any manners. I'll show him that I know what to do when people have weddings and things. I'll write:

“‘DEAR MAMMA: Please accept my congratulations on your getting married again. I *hope* you will be happy. Your *own* daughter,  
‘DOROTHY.’

“There, he couldn't find anything to laugh at in that.”

It was thoroughly proper and polite; a little short, perhaps, but invitations and acknowledgments of them were always that way.



The supper-gong sounded and Dorothy folded her letter hastily, scribbled off the address and was just about to seal the envelope when Marie appeared on the threshold.

"Hello, Dorothy!" said she. "Are you ready? Let's go down together. I've got something to tell you. Oh, have you written to your mother?"

"Yes," replied Dorothy, briefly.

"Did you put in about the dress?"

"No."

"Oh, do; please do. Mamma would be so pleased. I'll think you don't believe what I said about her being delighted to see to it for you if you don't put it in."

Dorothy hesitated.

"Go ahead," urged Marie. "It won't take a second."

Dorothy seized her pen and scratched a hasty P. S. to her formal note: "My organdie isn't fresh a bit. It's all rumpled up and the won't let down as much as I've grown. Marie Pollock says if you're willing her mother will have a dress made for me just like her's. Miss Lorimer will measure me. Your affectionate daughter,

DOROTHY."

She sealed the envelope hurriedly with an odd sort of sinking at her heart, and then scampered down-stairs with Marie, just in time to slip into her place before Miss Duprée said grace.

"Dorothy's got over her dumps," said Fanny Bergen to her neighbor on the right, Kate Van Voochries, between sips of soup and glances at Dorothy.

Kate giggled.

"Wonder whether her studious fit'll disappear along with 'em. Hope to goodness it will. She got ahead of me in algebra to-day, and it isn't fair, for she only gets her lessons in-between-times, and I have to dig all the time."

Kate laughed again. "When Dorothy takes the notion she can get ahead of us all," she said, smiling broadly, "but she doesn't often take the notion."

This time Fanny laughed, and Dorothy, across the table, reddened. She knew they were talking about her. To hide her embarrassment she leaned toward Marie and whispered: "You said you had something to tell me. Is it anything special?"

Marie's eyes brightened. "Well, perhaps you won't think so, but I do. I've just had a letter from mamma, and she says she wants you to come and stay with us for a whole month this summer. She says she'll write to your mother about it as soon as she gets back. Think what gay times we can have. Oh, Dorothy, I hope you'll come."

"Come?" echoed Dorothy, flushing with pleasure. "Well, I just guess I will come. It will be perfectly fine."

The two talked happily throughout the meal of their plans and prospects for the joyous month. Dorothy was to ride Marie's horse, play on the golf-link, and do all manner of novel and beautiful things. She was passionately fond of all out-door sports, and the programme Marie sketched out for them delighted her soul. Here, at school, she was captain of the basket-ball team, and one of the fleetest-footed of the runners in hare-and-hounds, and she felt an eager anxiety to distinguish herself in whatever game she undertook to play. But to ride horse-back! That was the most fascinating vision of all. She had always longed for a chance to try, and here it was ready to her

hand. She felt no doubt about obtaining her mother's permission to go. She took it for granted and began making her own plans at once.

"I think you and Marie are real mean," complained Della Carpenter in Dorothy's ear. "You do nothing but whisper and talk together all the time, and I have no one at all to say a word to. It isn't very entertaining."

"Why don't you turn the other way and talk to Sissy Faulkner," suggested Dorothy.

Della gave her a look of silent reproach.

"That was sort of cruel of me," admitted Dorothy honestly, "considering everything. Poor Sissy means well, I s'pose, but she is a little wandering in her mind."

Della laughed outright. "A little wandering in her mind—well, I should say so. She can't remember a thing two seconds. I asked her to hand me the bread a minute ago and she reached for the plate all right enough, but before she got hold of it she'd forgotten what she started out to do, and Hannah came and removed it, and I'm starving for a crust. Wandering! Well, I should think so."

"Do you remember the time," whispered

Dorothy, "she got up on elocution day to recite—oh, it was ages ago—and she couldn't get any farther than the first line, 'I am the family cat'? She repeated it three times, and then Miss Lorimer said she could resume her seat. Poor Sissy!"

Miss Duprée gave the sign to rise, and there was a general sound of shuffling feet, a pushing back of chairs, and then a movement of one and all toward the big doors that led from the dining-room into the hall.

"After supper" was always a jolly time at the Seminary, for then the day's work was over and the girls were free to amuse themselves in their own way until bed-time. The teachers retired to their own rooms or to the principal's parlor and left the students pretty much to themselves, for Miss Duprée believed that it did the girls good to be alone occasionally and to feel that she depended on their honor. And for the most part they respected their liberty and did not impose upon the teacher's trust. It was only once in a while that animal spirits got the better of discretion and they really did something that deserved rebuke.

The main hall was the general rendezvous.

and here, after tea, assembled big girls and little girls, vivacious girls and serious girls, all sorts and conditions of girls in fact, mingling together in easy good-fellowship, and enjoying their freedom and leisure to their hearts' content.

It was so warm this evening that the windows at the stairway landing were flung wide open, and through them came short puffs of mild May air and the thousand little sounds from grass and tree that make the night seem sociable.

Dorothy, overheated from playing pillow-dex, in her usual rash way ran to the window, slipped behind the curtain and let the cool air blow refreshingly upon her flushed cheeks. No one had noticed where she went, and for the time she was as much alone as if doors had been closed between herself and the crowd of chattering, laughing mates a few feet beyond. In a twinkling her thoughts were far away. She looked up into the dim, starlit blackness above her, and as she looked a lump seemed to rise in her throat and a mist in her eyes.

"That big star there," she mused, "'way down near the wall, I guess that must be right

over my mother's head now. It's later in France than it is here and she may be asleep. I wonder if she is. How I wish I could fly clear across the ocean and get to her this minute. I'd tell her—oh, I'd tell her everything, and she'd put her arms round me and I'd just snuggle up close as I used to do before she went away, and before—before—. Oh, me! I wish I were with her this minute—my own little mam-mady!"

She brushed her palm hastily across her eyes, then leaned against the window-frame and let her hot forehead rest against the cool pane. It would have shocked her sadly if any one had told her at that moment that she was homesick, for Dorothy despised such "mawkishness," but homesick she was, for the first time in all the years she had been at school. Somehow, before, her mother had always seemed "get-at-able" and near, even though she were many miles away, but now it was as if they were separated by something wider than half the world—deeper than the ocean. Yesterday she had cried with anger and resentment; now, confronted by this sudden new view of her position, she was too wretched to cry.

Somebody brushed past her going up-stairs and paused suddenly on coming in contact with her elbow. The curtain was drawn aside and Marie said, "Oh! hello, Dorothy! I didn't know you were here."

Dorothy gave a sharp little laugh. "Neither did I," she returned. "That is, I'd forgotten where I was—I was thinking."

Marie slipped through the curtains to her side. "How nice it is out-doors at night," she said; "so kind of still and calm."

"Yes, it starts one thinking" answered Dorothy.

"What were you thinking about?"

"Oh, nothing much. Did you ever notice the crickets, what a funny sound they make? Sometimes it seems to me they're like sleigh-bells—far-off ones, you know. Summer's sleigh-bells."

"Why, Dorothy," cried Marie, "that's real pretty! I never thought of it before, but they do sound so. I always thought they were like a faucet that wasn't turned hard off. Haven't you noticed how, sometimes, the air in the pipe will chirp?"

So fanciful Dorothy and practical Marie stood



and watched the stars together for a moment, and then, the retiring gong sounding loudly through the place, they both turned and "las' tagged" each other to their rooms to escape the crowd of girls who came pressing up the staircase on their way to bed.

## CHAPTER III

### READY FOR FUN

THE "studious" it about which Fanny Bergen had sarcastically wondered did not last, and neither did anything more than a shadow of the painful impression that had startled Dorothy so sharply the night before. The sunlight of the following day banished both and she was her old self again—stumbling merrily over her recitations and possessed, all through study-hours, with a wild desire to get out-doors. Miss Lorimer, seeing her eager eyes turn involuntarily toward the window every now and again, said to herself, "Shoe the old horse, and shoe the old mare—but let the little colt go bare." She would have liked nothing better than to let the little colt run unshod, without halter or curb, but if she had been able to yield to her impulse she knew very well that sooner or later there would be a disastrous runaway. As it was, she often found it difficult to make her

answer to the rein, and Miss Jenkins, the Latin teacher, found it quite impossible. Miss Jenkins, a highly cultured, thoroughly capable instructress, was invaluable to Miss Duprée, but the girls thought her just "a strict, fussy old maid," and never dreamed of going to her as they did to Miss Lorimer, on little visits of friendship and confidence. She did not invite their closer intimacy, and they withheld it in just the proud, shy way girls have at times which takes so much tact and sympathy to overcome.

Miss Jenkins never dropped her official manner, and when she asked them at tea if they would have muffins, she asked them the question in precisely the same tone as the one she used in inquiring whether they had prepared their Latin conjugations.

"The sight of her gives me the fidgets," Dorothy declared, stirring a panful of "fudge" that was bubbling merrily over her little spirit-lamp in her room, holding the spoon up to let the delicious stuff drip back into the rich, boiling mass below and watching the drops as they flossed off into bright threads from the tip of the bowl. "She gives me the fidgets."

"She gives you fits, you mean," broke in Fanny Bergen from her perch on Dorothy's bed. "My, but how she did go for you this afternoon! I should have answered back if I had been in your place. I couldn't have helped it. She was perfectly unfair."

"Oh, I don't mind her that way," returned Dorothy, good-humoredly. "She can talk at me all she wants to, if it does her any good, but when I see those gold-rimmed glasses and that pug of hair coming along the hall it seems as if I should fly. I think if she'd take off her specs and do her hair differently I could give her a respectable recitation; but I simply can't remember a thing when she peers at me through her magnifiers and I see that steeple of hair jutting up from the top of her head—a steeple on top of a dome! Architects, please copy! I always think of 'The lion and the unicorn were fighting for the crown,' and it puts me all out!"

Marie Pollock and Kate Van Voohries laughed; Marie because she always found Dorothy's explosions funny, and Kate because she had the giggling habit and couldn't be held responsible.

"If Miss Jenkins knew you called her a unicorn she'd love you better than ever," observed Fanny, leaning forward to tie her boot-lace.

"I didn't call her a unicorn," corrected Dorothy.

"Oh, well, you said she reminded you of one," went on Fanny, composedly.

Dorothy shook her head. "I didn't say that, either; but anyway it doesn't matter what I said. It's all the same in a hundred years. Here, girls! This fudge is done, ma'ams! Have you buttered the soap-dish, Marie? We'll need that and the big pan, too. I've made good measure to-day."

"Good measure! I should think so! I never saw such a lot. Oh, girls, doesn't it smell delicious?" broke in Fanny, appreciatively.

"I hope it'll be all right—rich enough and crumbly," observed Dorothy, as she set the pan on the window-ledge to cool.

They sat and chattered until it was hard, and then they munched luxuriously away, laughing and lounging in perfect lazy comfort between each toothsome mouthful.

"We're making quick work of it," ob-

served Marie, bending over the rapidly vanishing supply and helping herself to another cube.

"Why shouldn't we?" asked Dorothy, eyeing her empty lap ruefully. "What's a soap-dishful among one? And, oh, dear! Now I s'pose I've got to ask you all to vacate or hold your tongues, for I haven't done my Latin yet, and the amiable Jenkins will scold if I don't bring it in all right."

"We'll be as quiet as mice," promised Fanny, "if you'll let us stay. Hurry and get it over. I did mine ages ago. It's such a bother having it hanging over your head."

"Oh, sugar! how I wish there weren't any such things in the world as conjugations and declensions and such like nuisances," wailed Dorothy. "What do you s'pose I care what the ablative of the perfect participle is? But if I must, I s'pose I must, so here goes—'Mihi scribendum est!'"

For a second or two there was silence in the little room. The girls on the bed nibbled their candy and congratulated themselves on having got their books out of the way for the day, and Dorothy, in her hard little rocking-chair, bent

over her writing-tablet and scratched dutifully away at her lesson-pad.

Presently there was a crash.

"What under the sun!" exclaimed Fanny, springing upright with a startled scream. Kate giggled convulsively.

"Oh, Dorothy," remonstrated Marie. "You might have broken the water-jug! and there's your best writing tablet soaking wet in the basin!"

Dorothy leaned back disconsolately and ran her fingers through her hair. "Can't help it if it is," she returned. "I simply had to shy something somewhere. Say, Fanny, is 'weep' regular or irregular?—and will you please tell me whether it's in the first or second conjugation?"

"As if you didn't know," said Fanny, not deigning to explain.

"Oh, well, I s'pose so—'Fleo—flevi—fletum'—that's it, isn't it? I've sort of forgotten."

"Pooh, sort of forgotten!" mocked Fanny. "Dorothy Day, you're a great big humbug!"

Marie had promptly fished the ill-used pad out of the basin, and now she handed it to Dorothy, saying seriously, "Here, the under sheets

aren't wet a bit. Do please set about it this time in earnest, Dorothy, and get it over. We can't have a mite of fun until you do."

"Fun!" moaned the victim dolefully. "How on earth is a body going to have fun with datives and infinitives and animals of that sort hanging over her head? How under the sun do you construe this, Fan—'O quam facile erat orbis imperium occupare, aut mihi, Romanis militibus, aut, me Rege, Romanis!' cried out King Pyrrus!"

"Why don't you keep to one thing at a time?" demanded Fanny, in a tone of superiority. A minute ago you were writing your composition, and now you've skipped right over to something else. Settle and stick! That's the way I do. Then I get things done and out of the way."

Dorothy made a grimace at the giver of this sage advice. "Well," she returned, whimsically and ungrammatically, "Ain't I settled—and stuck? But if you won't help me out I'll go to Miss Jenkins. I'll show her my intentions are good, anyhow—and she's always saying she wants us to take our books to her room if there's anything we don't understand. I'm



going to take her at her word," and Dorothy jumped to her feet and disappeared through the doorway.

Marie twisted her handkerchief into a tiny, hard knob, and for a moment said nothing. But suddenly she threw the ball down on the floor and burst out vehemently, "I do think, Fan, you can be just about as mean as any one I know when you set about it."

Fanny looked up in astonishment at this unexpected outbreak. "Well, I like that!" she exclaimed, hotly. "I'd just like to ask what you're talking about, Marie Pollock?"

"You know very well. You needn't pretend you don't. Dorothy is always ready to help you or any one else whenever she has a chance, and you wouldn't even as much as give her a lift when she asked you. I think it's just as mean of you as it can be, so there!"

Fanny tossed her head. "If you're so awfully particular, why didn't you construe it for her yourself?" she demanded, angrily, and with a touch of malice.

A flush rose on Marie's face. "You know very well why," she returned, quickly. "I'm not smart and quick like Dorothy and you. No

matter how hard I study, I can't seem to get things through my head. Dorothy's quick as a flash, and could learn in a minute—and most of the time she doesn't give herself the minute—and you—you're slower, but you're sure, and you dig at your books into the bargain. The reason I didn't help her is—I couldn't; so there, now! You wanted to know, and I've told you, and I hope you're satisfied."

Fanny critically selected another piece of Dorothy's fudge and bit into it daintily before responding.

"The amount of it is," she exclaimed at last, "people expect to dance and have some one else pay the fiddler. I don't see why I should have all the hard work and let Dorothy Day have all the fun. If she wants to know her lesson let her learn it like I do."

"Lak ah do!" mocked Marie, hotly, mimicking Fanny's Southern pronunciation and idiom.

"As I do, then, if that suits you any better."

The eyes of both girls were flashing, and for once Kate Van Voochries forgot to giggle. It seemed to her that in another minute something dreadful would happen, for the usually mild Marie was roused to anger as she had never

seen her before, and Fanny, who was always ready to flare up at the slightest provocation, was furious at Marie's taunts and criticism.

But before they had time for another exchange of compliments the door was pushed hastily open and Dorothy appeared on the threshold, chuckling inwardly, a twinkle of fun in her eyes and her face all aglow with mischief.

"Oh, girls!" she exclaimed, in a mysterious undertone, "such a joke! Do come and see!" and immediately turned and tip-toed back along the corridor, Fanny, Marie, and Kate following behind, full of curiosity and speculation.

They were close upon her when she paused before Miss Jenkins's door, and dumbly pointed to a little white placard hung upon its panel, bearing the one word—"Engaged."

They dared not laugh aloud, but it was difficult to restrain the impulse, for they caught Dorothy's interpretation of the announcement at once, and the incongruity of it set their lips to twitching.

"Oh, girls, isn't it the funniest you ever saw in all your life?" breathed she, trying to control

her voice, which shook with fun. "Such a coy way of telling us! I wonder who's the happy man?"

"Why don't you knock on the door and ask?" suggested Fanny. "Say you were so excited you couldn't wait. You don't know, she might be willing to tell you."

"Mercy, no!" protested Marie, scared at the very suggestion. "Come away, Dorothy; she might open the door and catch us."

"But I can't go away and let that lovely chance slip," insisted Dorothy. "It's too good. I'm just crazy to have some fun, and this is the best joke in the world. Just think!—Miss Jenkins engaged! I have half a mind to send her some flowers."

"No, she'd misunderstand and think she'd won your heart. No, that wouldn't be any good!" insisted Fanny. "Just write 'Congratulations of the Girls' underneath and then skip. She'll never find out who did it and she'll know what you mean."

Dorothy raised her hands and clapped them together with a gurgle of appreciation. "Just the thing," she whispered.

Marie clutched her arm in real terror, but

Fanny exploded into a little smothered spasm of laughter. "Do, do!" she implored.

Dorothy hesitated.

"Do!" repeated Fanny, thrusting a pencil in her hand.

"Let her alone!" exclaimed Marie, harshly turning on Fanny a hot, angry face. "If you're so anxious to have it done, do it yourself."

"Mind your own business, please," returned Fanny. "You're growing into a regular Miss Smarty! But I advise you to attend to your own affairs, Marie Pollock, and let Dorothy manage hers. Here, Dorry, quick! She'll never find you out!"

Dorothy grasped the pencil with her usual easy compliance, and scribbled off the words in scrawling characters. It took but a moment, and then the girls turned and noiselessly sped back to her room.

Somehow, now that it was done, it did not seem half so funny as it had promised. But Fanny cast herself upon the bed and buried her face in the pillows, while her shoulders shook with laughter and Dorothy laughed, too, but in a less hearty way than usual, while Kate giggled hysterically, and Marie was divided between her

desire to join them and her dismal apprehension as to what might come after.

"It's the best thing I ever heard," panted Fanny as soon as she could control her voice. Then she and Dorothy and Kate went off into another spasm and Marie's exclamations of dismay were lost in the sounds of their gasps and shrieks.

"She'll be simply furious," declared Fanny, breathlessly.

"I don't believe it," retorted Dorothy. "She may be kind of provoked for a minute or two, but as soon as she sees the joke she'll be all right. I don't believe she'll care a straw—really."

"Oh, won't she, though?" sneered Miss Bergen.

"If I thought it would honestly make her mad, I'd run and rub it out," cried impetuous Dorothy. "I don't want to hurt her feelings."

"Oh, do!" urged Marie, eagerly. "Go right off and do it. She'll be as mad as hops, and you'll be in an awful pickle. Hurry, please hurry!"

The face of the perpetrator of the joke had suddenly grown serious as she realized that the victim might not appreciate her wit. She

waited a second, pondering the situation, and then jumped to the floor and flew out of the room and down the passage. But in a twinkling she was back again.

"Well, did you rub it out? You weren't gone a minute!" cried the three all at once.

"Rub it out!" echoed Dorothy, blankly. "She's taken it in!"

The quartette regarded one another in silence, which Marie was the first to break.

"What are you going to do now?" she asked.

"What is there to do?" demanded Dorothy.

"Ask her pardon," suggested Marie.

"What's the need, when she doesn't know Dorothy did it?" cried Fanny.

"Oh, that wouldn't make any difference. I'd just as soon go and apologize if I thought she'd really care."

"Well, you can make up your mind that she will. She'll be simply raging, and if you go and apologize she'll know you were the one who did it, and she'll make you pay up, I tell you that much."

"I tell you I don't care if I do have to pay up," cried Dorothy, irritably. "What is troubling me isn't that. If I thought I'd really hurt

her feelings I'd want to pay up. It's her feelings I care about."

"Oh, pooh! If she gets mad she gets mad, and that's all there is about it," insisted Fanny. "You can't change that, and if you went to apologize she'd probably laugh in your face."

Dorothy flushed. No one relishes the idea of having any one else laugh in his face.

"Yes, that's just what she'd do, you may depend. Better keep out of her way. She doesn't like you very well anyhow, and this'll make her down on you, hammer and tongs."

Dorothy's head flung up with a jerk. "Well, let it then!" she exclaimed, recklessly. "I'm willing to apologize, but if she won't have it she needn't. And I'd just as soon be killed for a sheep as a lamb; so here goes her old Latin," and off went the book into a corner with a careless fling, while Dorothy dropped into her chair and stretched herself with a defiant yawn.

"Aren't you going to do your composition either?" asked Marie, anxiously.

"Oh, yes; I guess I'll do that much just for the looks of the thing. Give me the pad, Fan



—it's there on the bed—and I'll scratch one off in a jiffy. Much obliged." And she bent over the paper for the space of about three minutes, when, straightening back with an exaggerated sigh of relief, she threw down her pencil and announced that now she was ready for fun.

## CHAPTER IV

### MISS JENKINS

It was only the day after that Dorothy suddenly realized that there might be trouble ahead. In the fun of the evening before she had completely forgotten Miss Jenkins, her joke and her unprepared Latin lesson. So when the recitation hour arrived she grasped her books with a hand that was not altogether steady and walked along the corridor rather more slowly than usual, and with considerable sinking at the heart. But all at once she quickened her steps and her spirits rose triumphant again. After all, what Fanny said was true; Miss Jenkins did not know who had written the message. She could only make vague guesses, and perhaps for her own sake (that is, granting she didn't see the fun of the thing) she would decide not to mention the matter at all. So if Dorothy showed any outward sign of nervousness she would only be "giving herself away"

and doing no good to anybody. She was humming softly to herself and smiling blandly as she entered the class-room.

Miss Jenkins, at her desk, waited for her to be seated and then began the lesson. She, herself, seemed quite as usual, and Dorothy felt reassured, especially as Fanny immediately proceeded to "communicate" with her, and even went so far as to send her a note asking if she had got over the effect of her "congratulations." She was holding the scrap of paper hidden in her lap and reading it with relish when Miss Jenkins called upon her for a conjugation. She stammered, hesitated, and the teacher passed it on. Upon the strength of that she grew reckless and scribbled a reply to Fanny, which she sent skimming along the aisle when she thought Miss Jenkins's back was turned. But curiously enough just at that moment the lady faced about and caught her in the act. Dorothy's cheeks flamed into vivid scarlet.

"Miss Bergen, be good enough to bring that paper to me," commanded the teacher sternly.

Fanny rose and did as she was bid, her teeth meeting upon her lower lip as she walked up to the platform.

By this time Dorothy's face was pale, but she did not flinch when Miss Jenkins summoned her to her desk.

Fanny was just coming down the aisle as she passed up, and, as they met, their eyes met, too. For an instant Dorothy gazed in astonishment—the half-defiant, half-nervous smile she had assumed faded from her lips. Then turning her face away she walked gravely and slowly to her place upon the platform.

All the while Miss Jenkins was talking she stood with downcast eyes thinking, not of the scathing words that were being publicly spoken about her, but of that one quick gleam of triumph in Fanny's eyes. It had been a mere flash—nothing more; had faded on the instant to a look of friendly encouragement, but Dorothy had caught it and it had startled her as one is startled by coming upon an unexpected object in the dark.

"She's glad—she's glad," thought the poor child bitterly. "And I never did anything mean to her to make her dislike me. I never even knew she did before, but of course she must, if she's glad." She ground her heel upon the floor to keep the tears back. She

dared not look up, but in a foggy way she knew that Miss Jenkins was standing beside her and making her an object of shame and warning to the class. But she only half-heard her sarcastic references and cutting rebuke.

"She was all right yesterday," Dorothy mused, following her train of thought; "why, she was as full of fun as any of us—ask Marie, ask Kate if she wasn't. She can't have turned round like this all of a sudden for nothing at all! What have I done to make her mad? Oh, dear! perhaps she didn't really mean to be glad; perhaps I just imagined it. No, I'm certain sure I saw her grin, and then she changed off in a minute and looked sympathizing. What a silly I am! Suppose she did grin! Couldn't she have been laughing at some one else? Yes, she must have been. She—" but just here her ear caught a word that brought her thoughts to a sudden startled standstill.

"I repeat—Unicorn!" Miss Jenkins reiterated in a voice as cold and sharp as the winter wind. "his respectful young person refers to her teacher in such terms as this. I leave you to judge for yourselves whether it is becoming language—whether it shows her to have the

proper sense of the difference in the positions of a teacher and a pupil—an educated woman and an ignorant child—a superior and an inferior! For any one who indulges in such coarse, slighting language is inferior. No girl with the instincts of a lady would do it. A true gentlewoman would shrink from such vulgarity; she would never so far forget herself as to deliberately wound the feelings of a fellow-being. Miss Day's behavior speaks for itself. It is neither respectful, becoming, nor kind. Her lessons are carelessly prepared, her conduct in class is unruly, and therefore her behavior toward me is disrespectful. It is unnecessary to repeat before these young ladies your offense of yesterday, Miss Day: I will spare you that. Perhaps you thought I would never come to know that you were the one who offered me the affront. I did come to know, and I am ashamed, not alone of your indelicacy, but of your cowardice in trying to shield yourself under an anonymous and misleading signature. Miss Day, you are dismissed from class. After this you need not attend Latin recitation. Report at once to Miss Duprée."

The stern voice ceased and Dorothy stood

silent and disgraced before the roomful of breathless girls. For a second she remained speechless, then she swung about impulsively, faced the teacher squarely and opened her lips to speak. But Miss Jenkins silenced her with an imperative wave of the hand and there was nothing left her to do but turn, and, with burning eyes and cheeks, leave the room.

"We will now resume our lessons," were the last words she heard as the door swung behind her.

She hurried blindly down the corridor, and, without stopping to give herself time to think of what Miss Duprée would say, knocked feverishly at the principal's door.

"Come in!" said a cheery voice from within, and Dorothy, turning the knob, stood planted on the threshold.

Miss Lorimer sat before the desk in the middle of the room and at sight of her visitor she raised her head and said kindly:

"Well, Dorothy, what can I do for you, my dear?"

The girl hardly recognized her own voice, it was so hoarse and sharp, as she answered bluntly, "I want to see Miss Duprée. Miss Jenkins told me to report."

"Miss Duprée has been called away suddenly and left me to take her place. I am acting in her stead and can listen to anything you have to say."

Dorothy turned and closed the door behind her with exaggerated care. Then she came forward a step or two and hesitated. At last she could command her voice, and then she said falteringly :

"I'm dismissed from Latin. Miss Jenkins had me up before the whole class. She said I was unruly and that I didn't prepare my lessons, and that I was disrespectful to her. She said I was to report to Miss Duprée."

"Dorothy !" exclaimed Miss Lorimer, in real distress.

"I know it! It's perfectly awful—but—but it wasn't quite the way she thought, and she wouldn't let me speak to explain. It's bad enough. I've been a nuisance and a horrid little wretch, I s'pose, but I didn't start out to be unruly and unladylike and all that sort of thing. I didn't, honest."

Miss Lorimer moved her chair and beckoned the girl to her side. "Now tell me all about it," she commanded, gently.



Dorothy hesitated. "I don't think I can tell you all about it," she returned, twisting her handkerchief into a hard knot and biting her lips to keep back the tears that would rise when she thought of Fanny.

Miss Lorimer considered. "Well, then," she said, after a moment, "tell me as much as you can without betraying others. Is it true that you have been careless about your lessons? You have really brought badly prepared recitations to Miss Jenkins?"

"Oh, yes, that's all true enough. I haven't done a bit well this term—but there! I hate Latin, and really, Miss Lorimer, I can't grub over my books as—as some girls do, and besides, Miss Jenkins makes me nervous; honest she does. She doesn't make me want to do things for her a mite. I just scratch 'em off in a jiff, and that's the end of it. She could make me do 'em better if only she was not so stiff and—"

"Hush, Dorothy. I can't listen to you if you begin to complain of Miss Jenkins. She is an admirable woman and a fine teacher, and if you do not work for her it is owing to your own waywardness. It is not fair, as you girls say,

to shift the blame on her. Did you have a good Latin lesson for her to-day?"

"No'm."

"Had you prepared any at all?"

"Oh, just a sort of a—kind of a—composition," stammered the girl, shamefacedly.

"Will you let me see it?"

Dorothy handed over the "sort-of-a-kind-of-a" composition with a reluctant hand. Miss Lorimer glanced at it, and her lips began to twitch. "Dorothy," she said in a voice that she could not keep steady, "listen to this. Can you truly say you think this a proper exercise: 'Regina filiam Juliam habet. Julia poetam amat. Poeta Corneliam laudat. Cornelia nautam amat. Nauta patriam amat.'"

"It isn't very long," admitted Dorothy, "but I thought it would do. It's a kind of story. 'The Queen has a daughter, Julia. Julia loves the poet. The poet praises Cornelia. Cornelia loves the sailor. The sailor loves his native land'—I don't see why that isn't interesting—just like novels, you know, where no one is happy. Only it isn't strung out. Besides, I got rid of constructions as much as I could. I simply can't manage them, Miss Lorimer, and

that's a fact. The truth of it is, I felt awfully frisky yesterday—I get that way sometimes, and then you can't think how hard it is for me to sit still and behave—and I didn't remember about constructions, and Fanny wouldn't help me out, and I wouldn't crib, and so—I just filled in with names, and made love go as far as it would."

Miss Lorimer laid her hand on the girl's shoulder. "Ah, my dear, that is just the point. Did you make love go as far as it would?"

Dorothy looked up with puzzled eyes, but in a second she caught the teacher's meaning.

"You mean Miss Jenkins?" she said at last, after a little silence, her voice growing suddenly serious.

Miss Lorimer nodded.

The girl shook her head. "No, I s'pose I didn't. But, Miss Lorimer, honest and true, I can't love Miss Jenkins. Nobody could. She's just too—but there, I won't talk about her. Only I know one thing, nobody could possibly love her. I defy 'em to do it."

Miss Lorimer smoothed back the girl's tumbled hair and hesitated thoughtfully a moment

before she responded, with a new gravity of tone and expression.

“Somebody did love her though, Dorothy—loved her very dearly, and she deserved it. Perhaps it will help you to understand Miss Jenkins better if I tell you that since she was a girl not much older than you are yourself, she has had to work for her living, and not alone for her own, but for her mother’s and brother’s as well. Her mother was an invalid, and for many years was helpless and dependent. Miss Jenkins looked after her faithfully, lovingly, until she died. Then her brother—the brother she adored—met with a hideous accident, and she not only went to him and nursed him tenderly at the time, saving his life by her utter devotion and care, but after he was sufficiently recovered to be moved from the hospital, had him taken to a pretty room which she provided, and supported him there in comfort until he, too, passed away, only a year or so ago. At the time of her brother’s accident she was engaged to be married, but she gave up everything—all her hopes and plans, and turned cheerfully to her duty, doing it with all her strength—really more than all, for she has overtaxed it severely,

and it is very uncertain whether she will ever be a well woman again."

The sober voice stopped and for a moment there was a deep hush. Then Dorothy burst out impetuously, "Oh, me! What a perfectly detestable little wretch I've been. Miss Lorimer, how in the world can I ever make it up to her? I'll do anything—really I will. I'll tell all the girls about what she's done—and—well, I guess they'll respect her after they know. I'll get up before the whole class and say I've been a detestable little wretch. I'll—I'll—"

"My dear child, you will do nothing of the sort," broke in Miss Lorimer gently, stemming the headlong torrent of her self-abasement. "You are particularly not to tell the girls what I have confided to you. It would offend Miss Jenkins very deeply to feel her private affairs were being made—excuse me, dear—a mere subject of school-girl gossip. I told you because I felt it would do you good to know, but the rest would only be curious and perhaps not altogether successful in hiding their curiosity. No, you must never repeat the story to any one. Let it remain sacred, and when you recall it, try to see if it does not help you to understand Miss

Jenkins a little better and make you want to work for her. Now go to your room and wait there until I send for you. I shall want you to come to me again within a half hour or so, but when I am ready I will send Hannah to tell you."

Dorothy rose and made her way slowly to the door, but at the threshold she paused and turned abruptly about again.

"Miss Lorimer," she said, shyly, "I wish—would you mind—may I kiss you? Just once?"

The young teacher took her in her arms and gave her a hearty hug. "Now, run!" she said, and sent her hurrying to her room, into which she shut herself and where she sat down on her hard little rocking chair to think.

## CHAPTER V

### CAT'S-PAWS

WHILE she was occupying herself after this wholesome and unaccustomed fashion Miss Lorimer and Miss Jenkins, in the principal's room, were busily engaged in discussing her and the causes she gave for complaint.

"But what I want to know," the younger woman was declaring—at the exact moment in which Dorothy up-stairs was, for the fiftieth time, calling herself a "detestable little wretch," and determining to turn over a new leaf, and what was more, to keep it turned—"What I want to know is, how all this came to your ears. The child certainly did not call you a unicorn to your face?"

Miss Jenkins flushed and her eyes roved nervously about the room.

"No—no!" she hesitated. "Certainly not. Oh, no! She did not call me a unicorn to my face. I am bound to admit that her manner to

me is always quite respectful, which makes it all the more hypocritical that she should put the other girls up to mischief behind my back."

Miss Lorimer interrupted her with a quick gesture. "Hypocritical? My dear Miss Jenkins, that is the very last charge in the world one could bring against her, I do assure you. I know the child well, and she is mischievous and exasperating, I allow; wayward and quick-tempered, if you like, but never underhand or double-faced. Please tell me how you came to know that Dorothy called you names; that she set the other girls against you, and that she wrote upon your door, and then, when her friends begged her to go and apologize, refused, saying you didn't like her anyhow and that she might as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb, and that in any case you couldn't know that it was she who really did it."

Again Miss Jenkins flushed, but this time Miss Lorimer met her eyes and fixed them with her own direct, compelling gaze.

"The fact of the matter is," confessed the Latin teacher at length, "that one of the girls informed me. She did not do it meaning to injure Dorothy, but she happened to come to



my room last night, and in the course of conversation she quite innocently let the whole story out. She is a studious girl, quite the best in the class, and she often comes to me when she needs help, and of course I am always glad to assist her. Then after we get through with the lesson she stays a moment and talks, and, as I say, she often drops a word or so, quite innocently, I assure you, that keeps me informed as to what the rest are doing and saying. Really, you know one needs such sidelights, else one could never deal intelligently with girls; they are so underhanded and insincere."

Miss Lorimer smiled. "I am afraid," she declared after a moment for quiet musing, "that in order to escape being made the dupe of your class you have allowed yourself to be made the dupe of one girl, and that both you and Dorothy have been acting as somebody's cat's-paw."

"Cat's-paw! What do you mean?"

"My dear Miss Jenkins, I have the greatest possible respect for your intellect and culture. I don't begin to know as much as you do about dead languages—but I know a good deal more about live girls."

Miss Jenkins shifted uneasily in her chair and smiled, nervously.

"Now," continued Miss Lorimer, kindly, "since you won't tell me, I may as well tell you frankly and squarely that I know who your informant was—Fanny Bergen. No, you needn't try to shield her. She doesn't deserve it. She tried the same little trick with me, but I made it clear to her at once that I would not countenance such duplicity for a moment. She understood that I saw through her and was wise enough to give up the game."

"But I can't comprehend—" stammered Miss Jenkins.

"No, of course you can't, you good soul, therefore I'll explain. You see, Fanny has a petty mean spirit. She would dislike any one who stood in her way or who was brighter or more popular than she. Dorothy is naturally both, and Fanny cannot resist trying to undermine her. She is very plausible. I confess I have to struggle hard not to dislike her, she is so calculating and sly. Now, Dorothy is just the other way. She never sees beyond the end of her saucy little nose, and she lets herself be imposed on most disgracefully. She is all you

say in the way of mischief and exasperation, but—well, one can trust her. When she is brought to see a thing in the right light you can rely on her to do her duty. Now, dear Miss Jenkins, with your permission, I am going to send for her, and not for her alone, but for Fanny as well. It will be a good plan to make a thorough investigation, and after it has been done to start afresh on a new basis."

The Latin teacher was inclined to protest, but in the end Miss Lorimer had her way, and in a few moments both the girls had answered her summons. In the beginning Dorothy did not know what to do, but after an instant, following blindly, as usual, her first impulse, this time for a wonder, a happy one, she went straight to Miss Jenkins, and with lips that trembled a little but in a voice that was low and firm, she said humbly, "Miss Jenkins, I'm awfully sorry. Truly I am. I didn't mean to be such a—a—nuisance. I hope you'll forgive me."

A shadow passed out of Miss Lorimer's eyes; a mist gathered in Miss Jenkins's, and the next thing Dorothy knew her hand had been cordially grasped and shaken and she heard an unfamiliar voice say, "Of course I forgive you,"

and was only convinced it was the Latin teacher's when, raising her eyes, she saw that it was really that lady who spoke.

But Miss Lorimer had no time for delay and set about her cross-examining at once. At the first question Fanny turned rigid and stony. Sometimes she replied sullenly; sometimes she refused to answer at all. But little by little the whole truth came out. Of course Dorothy could not be acquitted of all blame; she had been flippant and reckless and careless and rude, but her conduct was not what Fanny had represented it to be, nor had her faults been quite so deliberate, and Miss Jenkins was willing to admit that she had made a mistake.

"And remember this," said Miss Lorimer in conclusion, "that one of the weakest things one can do is to let one's self be made use of by another for any but the highest ends. Never permit yourself to be 'put up' to anything again, Dorothy. And Fanny, let me advise you to think twice before making a cat's-paw of your friends. You remember the story of the monkey and the chestnuts? Very well. One doesn't respect the cat very highly to be sure, the creature was credulous and a little stupid—

yes, stupid, Dorothy—and deserved to get its paws burnt, but one has one's own opinion of the ape. Now you may go."

The two girls were about to pass silently out of the room when an exclamation from Miss Jenkins caused them to stop.

"Oh, Dorothy! I forgot to tell you—you will appear as usual in class to-morrow. Fanny will show you—no, I will show you myself what the lesson is. You may come to my room after supper with your grammar."

Dorothy faced about with a quick movement. "Thank you, Miss Jenkins," she said. It was strange, but she was delighted to be taken back into the class she had detested.

Fanny stalked down the hall in front of her, and they both mounted the staircase, Fanny still ahead, in silence. But at the top she halted, and turning half around said:

"I suppose you're furious. I suppose you're mad at me. Miss Jenkins is nothing but a mean old thing to go and get me in her room and make me tell things and then—"

Dorothy regarded her scornfully for a moment. "Don't put it on Miss Jenkins," she said, coldly. "I'm not furious, and I'm not mad,

either. It's all right. Please let me pass. I want to go to my room."

Fanny stood aside and Dorothy stepped by her without giving her another glance. The next day her Latin lesson was a miracle of perfection. She felt she deserved Miss Jenkins's approval, for she had turned Marie and Kate out of her room in order to prepare it, and such a sacrifice as that was worthy of acknowledgment.

For a week she behaved with a propriety that fairly frightened Miss Lorimer, and then suddenly there came another "bounce-up," as the girls called it. It happened in this way:

Dorothy was sitting on the floor beside her narrow white bed entertaining her roomful of visitors, who occupied all the chairs and even perched on the window-sill. Her room was a favorite place of resort with the girls. She was not so "old maidish" as Kate Van Voochries about her counterpane, not so stingy as Fanny Bergen about her boxes, and much braver than Della Carpenter about preceptresses.

"As I was saying," said some one from the window-sill, "Dorothy really owes us one."

"Eh?" inquired Dorothy.

"Yes—a lark. We were all fixed for a jolly

one—you remember the day you heard about your stepfather—and you never showed up. It was a shame.”

“You had the cakes and pie,” suggested Dorothy. “I can testify that you had the cakes and pie—every mite of ’em—even the crumbles. I never tasted as much as a scrap. What more do you want?”

“You—and you weren’t there. Now we want something with you in it, voyez-vous?”

“Did you really want some of the viands, Dorothy?” asked Kate Van Voochries. “You didn’t come down to dinner, and I thought you hadn’t any appetite, or I’d have saved you some.”

“A stepfather is enough to take away anybody’s appetite,” broke in Fanny Bergen before Dorothy could reply. “I knew a girl once, and her mother married an awful man. He used to behave dreadfully, and beat her till she was ’most dead, and then he beat the girl.”

Dorothy gazed at her in silence for a second from between half-shut eyelids—a way she had of looking at people whom she did not understand. She did not understand Fanny. How a girl who had done what she had done could

force herself upon the one she had injured was more than Dorothy could comprehend. But she bit her lips and tried to be civil as she answered: "But my stepfather isn't at all like that. He's a gentleman and a brave soldier. He graduated at West Point, and has done all sorts of fine things out West, where the Indians are. And he could resign from the service, I guess, if he wanted to, but he thinks it's his duty to stay or something. His men just love him, and he likes it." In her eagerness to be loyal to this man who was her mother's husband she hurried on so fast in her defense of him that toward the end she grew quite breathless and confused.

"Oh, my! Hear her stand up for him, when we all know she hates him so she can hardly keep her eyes dry," taunted Della Carpenter.

"That's what I call weak-spirited," said Sadie Dunn, promptly. "It isn't a bit like you to be weak-spirited, Dorothy."

"I didn't mean to be weak-spirited," said the girl, slowly, "nor hypocritical, either. I'm not glad my mother married him, and I don't pretend I am; but he's a good man—my mother says he's a good man—and I don't think,



because I don't like him, I have any right to sit by and just kind of sit still and act yes when folks talk about beating and all that sort of thing."

"Good for you, Dorothy," cried Marie, bending down over the side of the bed to pat her on the head. "Good for you, my chicken."

"Well, I don't know," remarked Fanny, quite as if some one had appealed to her for an opinion. "It seems to me I'd rather be right down on a person all over than only half-way. If your stepfather is a good man, why do you hate him?"

"Because he is a—a—an—an—in—" Dorothy did not feel quite sure of the word she wished to use.

"I know—interloper," said Marie; "we had it in etymology. 'Interloper: one who intrudes upon a property, a station, or an office; one who interferes wrongfully.'"

"Lend me your memory some day, Marie?"—she pronounced it 'Marry'—inquired Fanny, spitefully. "It'd help out the whole class if you would. Now it doesn't do the rest of us a bit of good."

"I wish I could, Fan," replied Marie, point-

edly, "for then you might not forget your manners, and might remember to pronounce my name right."

"But no one seems to be thinking about the lark," interrupted Kate, seeing Fanny's eyes flash and fearing an open squabble. "It ought to be something splendiferous. Do let's think of something."

"What are you going to do this vacation?" inquired some one from the window-sill of Dorothy, disregarding all previous subjects.

"Spend a month with Marie for one thing," answered she at once, "and then—oh, I don't know. It depends on the—"

"Interlopers?" mocked some one else from the corner.

"On the way mamma feels. Sometimes she likes the sea and sometimes she likes the mountains; and last year we stayed all summer in the Berkshires. She always decides."

"Well, I guess she won't decide now. It'll be your stepfather who will do that after this," announced some one else.

Dorothy winced, but seemed to take no notice of the interruptions. She was thinking that in a week she would see her mother.

When her mother went away she had thought that the day of their meeting would be the happiest of her life, but now it was very different. She almost dreaded the coming home.

"Oh, dear! If you're going to sit there staring at the wall I suppose we might as well decamp. You're not very entertaining, Dorothy, that's a fact."

Dorothy gave a little start.

"Oh, excuse me, Pauline," she said suddenly. "I didn't intend to be rude. I was thinking, and you ought to consider what a remarkable thing that is for me to be doing and not find fault. What was it you asked?"

"I asked you what our lark was to be. Can't you think of something we never did before? Let it be something splendid!"

"Give me time. I'll dream over it, as mamma used to say, and—" Dorothy almost always choked a little nowadays when she mentioned her mother.

"Let it be something worth doing. I'm tired of these mild larks. Can't you tell us something your brother used to do at college, Marie? My cousin Dick always says, 'Well,

have you children been regaling yourselves again in the night hours on bad cakes and imagining that you are having a spree?" I wish we could do something to make him open his eyes," exclaimed Pauline Mullens, a pretty girl from the West.

Dorothy gave a sudden little scream and jumped to her feet.

"Girls, I have it!" she exclaimed in an excited whisper. "What do you say to sliding out one of these nights and taking a turn on the lake? No one would know. We could slip out in the dark before the moon rises—it doesn't come up till late now—and wait till it gets respectably shiny, and then off we'll go in the boat. It would be perfectly fine with no one to nag us whenever we turn our heads or cough for fear it would upset the crowd."

"But think of the danger! We might tip over!"

"Let us tip, then. No one need come who's afraid or doesn't know how to swim."

"Oh, dear! It will be frightfully exciting if the boat does capsize!"

"Capsize! Pooh! What nonsense. We'll just have the gayest sort of time all by our-

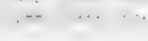
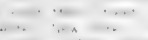
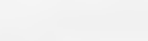
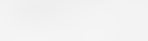
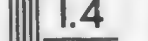
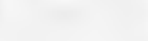
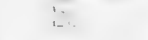
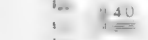
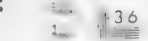
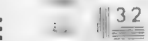
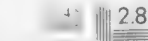
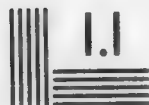
selves. We can have a few provisions if you like and eat as we float."

That practically settled it, and the arrangements were concluded then and there. It seemed a remarkable coincidence that all the girls of Miss Lorimer's room should be attacked by the same singular drowsiness and the desire to retire precisely on time that evening. Generally they hung back and pleaded for a few minutes' grace—they were "so staring wide awake." But to-night they needed no urging to go to their rooms at the stroke of the gong, and by half-past nine o'clock the only lights burning in the building were those in the principal's room in the tower. Even those were extinguished by ten. Perhaps if Miss Duprée had known what was afoot she would not have rested so placidly, and her "first sleep" would not have lasted until the rising-bell rang. As it was, six dark figures slipped past her window along the broad piazza roof, and then, sliding down the inclined plane of the shed, dropped noiselessly upon the soft turf below, and she was never the wiser. These spectres seemed to be of anything but a fearless nature, and the descent from the roof to the ground was attended



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by low, stifled exclamations, which were quickly and peremptorily silenced by a spirit below who seemed to have the command of the band. At last the phantoms, six in all, were assembled in the shadow of the shed. Then the leader spoke.

"Now we're on terra-cotta," she whispered; "the most dangerous part of the journey is over. All we've got to do is to run to the boat-house, and if any one makes a noise, why it's all up with us."

In a few moments they had unlocked the boat-house door and, three on a side, were lifting the light skiff from the little wooden wharf and shoving it into the water. Then one after another they crept into their places and rowed the boat away from the shore. They floated on until some one suggested that it must be going to rain; the moon was not coming out.

"Rain! Pooh! Look at the stars, as thick as spatter," declared Dorothy. "The moon is all right. It isn't late enough yet. Has any one a watch?"

"A watch? Why don't you ask if any one has a folding bed or a Saratoga trunk or any other little trifle of that sort? It seems to me



we did pretty well getting out as we did with the bag of cookies and the rest of the stuff, without expecting us to carry all the modern conveniences into the bargain."

"It wasn't into the bargain, it was into the boat," announced Dorothy. "And now for mercy's sake don't be cross, girls. Oh, I say, isn't this just festive. How pretty the water is! And I never saw the stars look softer. Look, look, there's the moon!"

The very sight of it set them all to giggling delightedly, and they spent the next half hour admiring it as though they had never beheld it before, in the meantime nibbling cookies, munching fudge, and "topping off" with pale, luscious brine pickles. They dared not indulge in much conversation for fear of being overheard, for sound carried far on these still summer nights, but they drifted idly about, told occasional jokes in choking whispers, and only consented to turn their faces homeward when drowsiness got the better of them and they yawned openly before one another's very eyes without enough energy to apologize.

Once the boat was safely stowed away in its place they had to turn to the serious business

of getting back into their rooms without rousing the house. It proved to be much more difficult to climb the shed-roof than it had been to descend from it, and there were many smothered screams and whispered rebukes as the girls clambered up to grasp the overhanging eaves, upheld by friendly hands from below. At last all were up but Dorothy. Then the question arose how she was to contrive to gain a hold above with no one to "boost" her from the ground.

"'Sh! I'll manage somehow. You go on ahead and slip in and clear the track," she whispered breathlessly, and the girls, only too glad to obey, left her to shift for herself.

They were more successful than she, for they were safe within the Seminary walls before she had even discovered the barrel upon which she finally stood and which enabled her to grasp the uneven shingles and begin her slow ascent of the shed-roof. But her progress met with a sudden check; and try as she would she could not stir farther. She felt that the hindrance came from her skirt. It was as if some strong hand held her back. She turned her head and looked behind; but she was alone in the night,



" I MUST GET IT "



with only the moon and stars above her and the velvety grass beneath. She gave herself a sudden strong tug, but it was no use.

"It's my horrid skirt," she thought. "Now if I can't get away, I'll be in a pretty pickle. The embroidery has caught on a shingle, and here I am fast and tight and can't get loose. Come off, you old thing!" She gave another quick and forcible upward pull.

Certainly! Now the thing was done. A great white fragment of her flounce had torn away and hung fluttering in the moonlight.

"That will tell the whole story to-morrow morning," she thought. "If Miss Lorimer happens to look out of her window she'll see it the first thing, and then—oh, I must get it!"

She made a clutch behind her at the flapping rag. Of course she could not reach it, and in the midst of her struggles she heard a sound at the window above. It frightened her, and she frantically clutched again at the fragment just beyond her reach. Another sound came from above.

Dorothy waited until all was quiet again. Then she hitched herself back toward the white patch, succeeded in reaching it, and grasping it

firmly, gave it a mighty wrench. Alas! it gave way all too readily. Her arm twisted beneath her, and a pang like the piercing of a sharp blade shot through her wrist to her elbow. For a moment she was dumb with pain, and then she uttered a little sob.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she gasped. "What is this dreadful ache? It makes me sick to move my arm! How can I get up now? If only the girls had stayed to help me! But they're all in bed by this time."

The poor child was writhing in agony, but she made no sound, bravely smothering her desire to cry, and trying to crawl up the incline by the help of her uninjured arm. She never knew how long a time it took to scramble up to the piazza-roof, but she was so faint and weak when she reached it that she could scarcely stand, and had to crouch down for a moment to gain strength to go on. The pain in her arm grew severer each moment, and she assured herself that if she did not get to her room at once she would never be able to reach it without help. So she dragged painfully to the window, inch by inch, and climbed through, setting her teeth, the great beads of agony rising on her forehead.

At last, after noiselessly closing the sash, she made her way down the dark corridor and to her own room. Once there, she flung herself upon her bed and, burying her face in the pillow, cried as if her heart would break. Oh, the pain! the pain! It was so sharp! She could think of nothing but her agony. No thought of her disregard of the rules crossed her mind. She had no room for regret of any sort yet in her heart, except for her hurt. Then with a sudden shock came the thought: How could she account for her injury in the morning?

## CHAPTER VI

### COMMENCEMENT

DOROTHY had never welcomed the sound of the rising-bell as she did this morning. All through the long hours she had lain on her bed crying miserably or pacing her little room, stifling her groans and trying to bear her pain without a sign. She had not thought of removing her clothes until well on toward daylight, and then she had suddenly remembered that if she wished to avoid being "found out" she must begin by practicing dissimulation—pretending to have been in bed all night. How she was to account for the injury to her arm she could not think. But it finally managed itself.

A few moments after the rising-bell rang there was a knock upon her door. She was standing before her tiny looking-glass, trying to arrange her hair into its customary long braid, with one hand.



"Come in," she said, tremulously.

Miss Lorimer entered. At sight of her Dorothy straightened herself up and set her teeth hard, trying to hide her swollen wrist behind the folds of her skirt. But her face told the story all too plainly, and at sight of her haggard cheeks and dark-ringed eyes Miss Lorimer gave an exclamation of shocked surprise.

"My dear!" she cried, "what has happened to you? You are sick. Tell me, Dorothy, what is the matter. You look as if you had not slept all night. Poor child! Is it the old worry again?"

The kind words went straight to the girl's heart and her overcharged nerves gave way under this new strain—the endeavor to basely deceive this woman who was kind to her. She bent her head and sobbed wildly for a few moments while Miss Lorimer went to her and took her in her arms. In gathering the shaking little figure to her side she pressed against the injured arm, causing the sufferer to cry out with sudden pain.

Miss Lorimer looked down and saw. She knew at a glance what the trouble was, but how it had come about she did not even try to discover.

"You poor, poor little thing!" she said, her voice unsteady with sympathy. "Wait here a moment. I am going to 'make it well,' as they say to the babies."

She hurried from the room, coming back presently with cloths and arnica and strips of flannel, and began to bind up the aching wrist, uttering words of comfort and encouragement meanwhile. But every syllable, instead of soothing her, pierced Dorothy like a thorn.

"It is only a sprain," said Miss Lorimer, "and if we are careful it will soon be sound again. But you were a foolish Dorothy not to come to me at once."

Dorothy said nothing.

"I had a friend," Miss Lorimer went on, "who sprained his arm in the night just as you have done. He could not account for it at all and the physician said he must have wrenched his wrist in his sleep."

The breakfast-bell rang.

"I will explain it to Miss Duprée," said the kind teacher, "and have you excused from chapel. Good-by. I will send you up some toast and tea."

She was gone before Dorothy could say a

word—even if she had wanted to—of protest or explanation.

A dainty breakfast made its appearance before very long, and though she tried to eat, every mouthful seemed to choke her, and she sent it down only half tasted. She tried to sleep, but when she closed her eyes she seemed to see herself in the light of a mean impostor.

"But I'm not lying," she insisted to her conscience. "If she thinks I hurt my wrist in my sleep why can't I let her keep on thinking so? And, besides, if I told—there are the other girls."

"But you have nothing to do with the other girls," returned her conscience. "You are lying just as much by keeping silence now as you would be at another time by telling a falsehood. You are acting a lie."

When Miss Lorimer came up again to see how she was faring she was astonished to find her patient still awake and as feverish as before. She sat down beside her to lay her palm upon the throbbing temples.

"No, no, Miss Lorimer," Dorothy exclaimed, sitting up. "Please don't—yet. If you knew you'd think I was only being served right, and

I don't suppose you'd try to cure me at all—only you're so good, perhaps you would. Anyway, I'm going to tell you, because I—must. I didn't hurt my arm in my sleep. I was awfully awake. And I wasn't in bed. I was on the—shed-roof."

The teacher looked at her in wonder.

"The shed-roof?" she repeated, wondering if Dorothy were not delirious and wandering.

"Yes, ma'am, the shed-roof. I kind of felt as if I must have some fun last night, and so I slipped down the hall and crawled out of the window and all along the piazza till I came to the shed, and then I slid down the roof—and—and came back again, and it was when I was crawling up that I hurt my arm. I'm awfully sorry. I'm sorry clear from my head to my feet. I feel just as if I never wanted to have any one look at me again."

"There, there, Dorothy! That will do. I cannot quite understand this affair, and you are in no condition to explain it more clearly. When you have slept and are stronger, we shall hear the rest."

She left the room. Dorothy dropped back against her pillow with a sigh of mingled un-

easiness and relief—uneasiness because of the fear that, if more questions were asked, the other girls' share of the frolic might come to light, and relief at having confessed her own fault. Presently she fell asleep and slept heavily until quite late. When she woke she found Miss Lorimer beside her.

"You have had a long nap," said the teacher, kindly. "And now, here is a little cold luncheon for you."

She produced a tray. Dorothy was very hungry and ate with relish, her companion sitting beside her and looking up now and then with eyes whose expression the girl could not quite understand.

When the last crumb was gone Miss Lorimer set the tray aside, and turning to her patient, said: "Now tell me all about last night. I will not say 'keep nothing back,' because I trust you sufficiently to believe you will tell me the whole truth. Poor child! Do you notice how many times I have to say, 'Now tell me all about it, Dorothy?' Why will you get into so many 'scrapes,' as you call them? Do you really think it pays?"

Dorothy felt strangely humble, and when she

tried to say "No," her voice trembled as though she were on the verge of tears. But she did not cry; instead, she gulped hard for a moment and then braced herself to tell the story. Miss Lorimer listened patiently and asked for no more than the girl chose to tell. Whatever her private opinions were she kept them to herself, and her serious talk with Dorothy about disobeying orders and defying authority was in no wise a sermon. Miss Lorimer did not believe in "sermons."

Neither did Miss Duprée, but her methods of getting at the facts without their aid were a little different from her associate's. She appeared in the class-room just before dismissal and desired any or all of the young ladies connected with last night's misconduct to hold up their hands. Out of all the class only one arm was raised—Dorothy was still in her room—and that was Marie Pollock's.

Miss Duprée waited a moment, as though in expectation of seeing more respond to her call, and then remarked, sternly: "Of course, having put you young ladies upon your honor, I cannot think for a moment that any concerned would fail to acknowledge herself. Therefore

I suppose Miss Pollock is the only other offender. Should there be, however, any one who from fear or any other motive has tried to shield herself by silence, I trust she will remember that while disobedience is a fault, dishonor is a crime."

Again she paused, but no one made an attempt at confession, and after telling Marie to come to her in her study, the principal left the room.

The moment the girls were able to escape from the place they gathered into a little knot, and began to whisper among themselves about Dorothy's treachery.

"Miss Lorimer was with her early this morning. I saw her go into her room. And they talked, and, of course, Dorothy gave the whole thing away. Miss Lorimer shows a great deal of partiality," complained Fanny Bergen. "She always manages to let Dorothy off easy, and then bears down hard on the rest of us. It's positively unfair. Of course, Dorothy told her own story. Talk about honor. I'd like to know if she's been honorable."

"Besides, she got us all into it," explained Pauline Mullen.

"Yes, indeed," assented Kate Van Voochries. "We never should have thought of going out in the boat if it had not been for her. She proposed it."

"And helped us on the shed-roof, and everything. She was just the worst of us all, so there!"

"If you had raised your hand, Paul, I'd have raised mine," whispered Della Carpenter. "I kept watching to see if you would, but you didn't."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Pauline, sharply, "it's a pity about you. You needn't speak in that kind of dependent way either. If you wanted to be so fine why didn't you put up your hand on your own account and not wait for me. I'm not responsible for your actions, Miss."

"The fact is," said Kate, "we're all in a pretty mess, and I'm going straight up to Dorothy's room and tell her what I think of her. I'll pay her up."

"Why, I don't see how we're in a mess," returned Fanny. "No one knows about us."

"You goose! Of course not. Only a fellow feels uncomfortable, and that's mess enough. If Dorothy hadn't told—"



"Dorothy didn't tell!"

The girls started apart, and then, behind them, stood Miss Duprée, stern-faced and severe. The girls shrank back.

"No, Dorothy did not tell!" repeated the principal, coldly. "Neither did Marie Pollock. In the first place, I do not believe in trying to make one girl inform against another, and even if I did, Dorothy would have been the last to answer any questions that might implicate you. Marie Pollock confessed to her own fault, but I might have imagined that those two alone were to blame if I had not been fortunate enough to come upon you just now and receive your own evidence against yourselves. I am sorry to find that out of six there are only two who have the moral courage, to say nothing of honor, to speak the truth. You may go to your own rooms, young ladies. You need not appear at supper, as I feel a desire to spare you the mortification of hearing your names read before the whole school as having been connected with Dorothy and Marie in last night's performance, and having failed to declare yourselves even when your honor was appealed to."

The girls went slowly from the room.

The principal's heart did not soften to them even when she saw that most of them were crying. Their worst offense in her opinion was their silent untruth. After they had disappeared she stood for a moment looking gravely out of the window. What she saw was not the smoothly cut lawn nor the spreading shade-trees in the grounds beyond. It was a shaggy-haired, bright-eyed girl, whose face was aglow with mischief, and whose garments were made in the fashion of twenty years ago. Her eyes softened as she looked.

"Poor little witches," she said to herself. "They are all alike. I suppose I was like that myself once. Only I'm sure I wasn't a sneak—I'm sure I owned up truthfully. I suppose only God and their mothers really understand them."

But she could not spend many moments musing. These were busy days for her, and, in fact, for all the staff. Commencement was coming, and the preparations for it were being pushed forward rapidly.

For two weeks cards of invitation had been flying and the rooms at the hotel, even to the smallest of them, had been secured in advance

by parents of the graduates, "their sisters and their cousins and their aunts," and by the relatives and guardians of those who were not graduates, but who were to be taken to homes at a distance for the long vacation.

The chapel in which the exercises of the day were to be held was fragrant with blossoms and dim with shadowy boughs, while the gymnasium, where the final reception was to be held, was turned into a veritable bower. Poor Barney, the man-of-all-work, had oiled and polished the floor until he declared his "back was broke."

These commencement days were the bane of his existence, for it was Barney here and Barney there until the poor man was "kilt entirely," and when he happened to be taking a breathing spell for the space of a minute, Bridget, his wife, who was the Seminary cook, would always observe:

"Och, Barney, me b'y, while yer ristin', be schrubbin' down me sthairs, for they nade it the day."

Dorothy did not look forward to the festivities with much enthusiasm. Her sprained wrist was still in bandages; a new dress was lacking,

and there was the prospect of the meeting with the "interlopers."

But she had determined to swathe her arm in a pretty silk handkerchief, to make the most of a bad job and be satisfied with her last summer's white organdie, and to remember only the fact of her mother's coming, which would reconcile her to the rest. She and her classmates were the gayest of the gay. Having served their sentence and being forgiven, they could rest assured that their misbehavior would never be referred to again.

Dorothy was holding one of her informal receptions in her room after study hours, when Barney appeared, bearing in his arms a huge bundle, and remarking, as he deposited it on the bed: "It's meself is wonderin' what's the contints, Miss Dorothy. They do be so loight an' yit so lar-r-ge."

The girls laughed and then crowded about, while Dorothy snapped the cords and eagerly tore away at the wrapper of strange, foreign-looking paper that enveloped the whole. It seemed to her she would never get through cutting strings and unfolding covers, but at length the last sheet was cast aside and there

lay a white, wooden box whose cover she whipped off in a twinkling and in which she could see at first nothing but a mass of delicate tissue paper.

"Tweak it off—tweak it off!" screamed one of the girls, hysterically, and Dorothy did as she was bid, saying, breathlessly, "I sort of think—it may be—a—dress. And if it is—ah!"

For at last the final protection was flung aside and there, beneath its coverlet of muslin wrappings, in its bed of tissue paper, lay the daintiest little frock imaginable, a mass of filmy lace and delicate mull. The girls' eyes shone with interest and they did not rest until the fascinating affair had been taken out and tried on. It proved to be just the right thing—simple, graceful, and fitting to perfection.

The fact that the lace was real did not greatly enhance its value in the girls' sight, for would it not have been enough in any case that it came from Paris?

It was Miss Lorimer who told Dorothy what a costly little garment it was, at which Dorothy looked grave.

"If it was so expensive I don't see how mamma ever could have bought it," she said, "for

she isn't rich, you know, and when I wrote about having a new dress for commencement she said she was afraid she couldn't afford it. And to think of her having sent not only the dress but slippers and laced stockings, and handkerchief and fan, and—everything!"

Miss Lorimer smiled and presently went away, while Dorothy felt that one of her cares was lifted from her mind. She was aware that rooms had been reserved at the hotel for her mother and the "interlopers," and she kept an anxious lookout all the morning of commencement day for her, for she knew she would have to pass the Seminary on her way from the station. But though carriages and hacks rolled by in plenty she could catch no glimpse of the face she loved. During the exercises in the chapel her eyes roved over the audience in eager search, but still she could not find her mother. At the last meal they were to eat all together this term the girls were allowed special privileges, and they chattered and laughed incessantly.

"Are your people here, Fanny?"

"Yes, indeed! Didn't you see my mother this afternoon?"

"My cousin Dick is here. Did you see him in the chapel? That light-haired one with the mustache. He's dreadfully clever; he goes to college and is a switch-back, or whatever you call 'em, in the foot-ball team." The girls laughed delightedly.

"Better tell him that. He'll enjoy it," some one said.

"I kind of wished I was graduating when Miss Loring read her essay and got so many flowers and was applauded. It must be lovely fun. And then, just think, no more lessons next year!"

"Pooh! I don't mind. I like it here and I'm coming back, aren't you, Dorothy? By the way, where's your mother?"

Dorothy gave a short, disappointed sigh. "I guess she must have missed the train or something," she replied. "I've watched for her, but she hasn't come yet. I'm worried. Perhaps she will be on the eight forty-five; she wouldn't take a later one. Oh, there! Did you hear that fiddle? Those musicians are here good and early. Isn't it fun?"

When the girls found themselves in the immense room familiar to them as the gym-

nasium, but quite unfamiliar now with flowers everywhere and guests arriving constantly, they could scarcely keep their feet still with excitement.

Dorothy had forgotten her chagrin for a moment and was chatting gayly to a neighbor when some one touched her upon the elbow and whispered in her ear :

“ You’re wanted in the reception-room, Miss.”

She needed no second bidding, but rushed away, her heart beating joyously, her lips trembling, her only thought being of her mother. Her feet scarcely touched the stairs, she ran so fast, yet when had the distance from gymnasium to reception-room seemed so long before ?

But in a moment, which only seemed an hour long, she was pushing open the door and passing through it like a little whirlwind, her arms open, her heart beating and on her lips the cry, “ Oh, mamma ! mamma ! ”

But the words died before they were uttered ; for suddenly, as though in a moment she had been turned to immovable stone, Dorothy stood still, her color fading, her breath forsaking her and her heart almost ceasing to beat.



The room was nearly deserted. Not quite, for by the table sat a gentleman who rose to meet her as she entered; who saw her change from a joyous girl into a cold little statue, and who, stepping forward, held out his hand, saying: "And this is Dorothy?"

## CHAPTER VII

### THE INTERLOPER

DOROTHY made no reply. Indeed, she was having all she could do to keep from bursting into sobs from disappointment and nervous dread. She had come up expecting to see her mother, and here was nothing but this stranger to welcome her. It seemed to her that her heart had leaped into her throat and was going to choke her. Why had not her mother come? Was she sick? The very thought made her weak and dizzy.

At first she had an idea that the gentleman had bent down as if to kiss her, but she had started back with a gesture of repugnance, and when she looked up again he was standing erect and stalwart by the table, one hand resting lightly upon it, the other thrust into the breast of his closely buttoned coat.

Colonel Everest did not make another attempt to touch her hand. He contented himself with

glancing at her as she stood before him, her breast heaving, her eyes downcast, and her fingers nervously clutching the lace upon her skirt.

Then he repeated in his full deep voice:

"And this is Dorothy?"

"Yes."

That was all. He had asked a question and she had answered. She would not give him the satisfaction of seeing her break down, and she knew that if she spoke, her words would end in a cry. If her mother had been there it would have been different. But she was not, and her unexplained absence cut Dorothy to the quick; but she would rather have died than ask "this man" why he had come alone.

The Colonel understood the quick, keen flash of passionate dislike that passed over Dorothy's face. He knew that she was disappointed and angry, and guessed rightly that she would ask for no explanations.

"I am sorry that I am here in place of your mother. Our voyage across was particularly severe, and both she and Helen were so worn out by it that I thought better to leave them in New York, while I came on to bring you home. You

see, we only got in yesterday, and my wife—your mother—would have had no time to rest. After all, the delay in meeting is only of a few hours. We can leave here by any train you wish tomorrow. I shall be at your service as early as daylight, if you choose.”

“My wife!—I thought better!”—Dorothy raged inwardly against him more bitterly than ever. What right had he to prevent her mother from coming to her? She was her mother before she was his wife, and—but she only raised her head high, and with a little outward tilt of her chin, replied:

“If my mother was not well I am glad she did not come. Do you wish to go down-stairs now? We are having a reception there, and—I don’t want to miss any more of it.”

There was a twinkle in the Colonel’s brown eyes, but Dorothy was not looking at him and did not see his amusement at her awkward attempt to be haughtily indifferent.

“What a hostile little enemy I have here,” he thought. But he merely replied: “Yes; certainly. Let us go.” And with grave and courteous dignity he offered her his arm.

This gave Dorothy another opportunity, for

she bluntly declined the offer. Colonel Everest accepted her refusal with an inclination of the head, and it was then that he spied the bandage upon her wrist.

"I see you have met with an accident," he said, in a tone of sympathy. "I hope it is nothing serious."

"Oh, no," she replied, with a careless laugh. "I sprained it about a week ago climbing out of the window in the middle of the night. I went out on the lake rowing, and when I came back I hurt my arm."

She wanted to shock him. She had a reckless desire to make him think as hardly of her as she could. What did she care what he thought of her? He wasn't her father.

"Rowing on the lake in the middle of the night?" repeated Colonel Everest, quietly.

"Yes. Against rules," declared Dorothy. "That's why I did it. I—never—obey any one except—my mother."

Her companion did not appear to be either surprised or interested in her announcement. He merely said: "We army men make a great deal of obedience. It is one of the first duties of a soldier."

"Oho!" thought Dorothy. "So he expects me to be obedient to him, does he? He thinks he can manage me with his talk about army men and soldiers, does he? Well, he'll see—"

She swept before him to the door and led the way down the staircase to the "ball-room." At the threshold Colonel Everest paused, and standing aside, permitted Dorothy to pass in before him.

"Just for all the world as if she was a young lady," whispered Della Carpenter, who happened to be watching the door as they entered.

Miss Lorimer was standing near, and in a moment Dorothy made her way to her side and whispered unsteadily:

"Miss Lorimer, please talk to him; I can't. I—" and then in a louder tone, untrembling and distinct, turning to her stepfather: "Colonel Everest, please let me introduce you to Miss Lorimer."

Then, without another word, she left them and abruptly disappeared. Neither Miss Lorimer nor Colonel Everest could restrain a smile which on neither side was one of amusement. Miss Lorimer took in the situation at a glance. She knew what Dorothy's disappointment must

have been at not seeing her mother, and she suspected that she had vented it on the Colonel. He saw that she understood, and so they were at once on common ground. The young teacher looked up into the face of the handsome, soldierly man beside her, and with one swift, searching glance saw what it would take poor little passion-blinded Dorothy months to discover, that here was a true, noble, great-hearted gentleman.

By this time many eyes were turned toward the stalwart figure standing erect and tall beside the slender teacher.

The head with its dark hair, just dashed with gray at the temples, was held high enough to make the large brown eyes appear always to be looking down, when what they looked at was a woman, while the square shoulders and military bearing of the man gave him a special air of distinction.

The girls whispered among themselves, "That's Dorothy's stepfather. Isn't he splendid?"

Miss Lorimer saw something more in him than that, and it encouraged her. She read his character, and saw that he was a man who could win his way into the heart of wayward, gen-

erous Dorothy. She gathered up her courage and began to tell him about the girl, sketching her real nature, which she had taken such pains to conceal. At the end she said :

"She is pure gold at heart. I have never known her to do a mean or dishonest act. We all love her here, though she tries us sometimes, and I know you will love her, too."

"You may be sure I shall." The words were grave and quiet, but Miss Lorimer felt that it would not be Colonel Everest's fault if they did not come true.

Her duties soon called her away and she was forced to excuse herself. Colonel Everest sat a few moments watching Dorothy, now one of the merriest as well as one of the most graceful of the dancers, and presently the shifting and movement of the crowd brought her so near to him that his coat sleeve brushed her shoulder. She tried to look unconscious, but her scowl was beginning to be altogether too apparent, when Marie Pollock came tripping up to her, all a-smile, and banished it by saying :

"Oh, Dorothy, mamma is right back of me and I want you to know her and—and—here, mamma, this is Dorothy."



Then there was nothing for Dorothy to do but present her stepfather to Mrs. Pollock, and try to slip away under cover of the introduction.

But the kind lady would not let go her hand. "I have heard so much of Dorothy from Marie that I feel I know her already," she declared, and after a few commonplaces she repeated the invitation that she had extended to her through Marie some weeks before.

"Will you tell your wife, Colonel Everest, that we count on having Dorothy with us for at least a month this summer?"

The girl turned scarlet with pleasure and was about to burst out with a grateful, "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Pollock, I'd love to go. I'll ask mamma if I may, and I know she'll let me," when she heard with a shock of dismay her stepfather replying:

"Thank you, Mrs. Pollock. But I think we could scarcely spare her. My wife has been separated from Dorothy for so long that she will want to keep her beside her now, and as for me—I am just about to begin enjoying the thought of having my family about me. I'm afraid I could not be unselfish enough to lend you our little daughter for even a week."

There! He had done it fairly and squarely this time.

Dorothy grew white with anger, and deliberately turned on her heel and left the spot. What right had he, a stranger, to refuse an invitation for her? What right had he to call her "his family," his "little daughter?" She wasn't "his family." She hadn't anything to do with him or he with her. He was nothing but an interloper.

The lights, instead of gleaming gayly as they had seemed to do at first, appeared like so many eyes trying to stare her out of countenance, while the merry buzz and hum of the crowd only seemed mocking her unhappiness.

"He meant from the first to make me suffer. He does everything to plague me. Made my mother not come, and told Mrs. Pollock I couldn't go, and—and—he wants to be cruel to me. Why should I love him? He doesn't love me; didn't even kiss me when I came upstairs and my mother wasn't there—but I don't care. I don't like him! I—I hate him!"

Then out gushed the burning tears, which she angrily brushed away with the lace handkerchief that had certainly not been made to be

wept upon. She had slipped behind some screening palms in a French window, and here, in her dim retreat, she raged and fumed to her heart's content. Once in a while she peered curiously out upon the brilliant room, and it was on one of these occasions that she saw Colonel Everest the centre of a little group of laughing, admiring ladies, who listened to what he was saying with very decided interest, and who seemed to find him anything but villainous. It irritated her so that she dried her eyes instantly and hurried out into the room again. As Miss Lorimer caught sight of her she beckoned kindly, and Dorothy gladly slipped to her side, even though that brought her into her stepfather's vicinity. As she came up Miss Duprée slid a finger beneath her chin, and lifting her face, asked if she were tired.

"The heat of these rooms is stifling," she said, "and your eyes look as if you had been sitting, like 'Dolly Flinders, near the cinders'—only in your case the cinders must have been alive."

Colonel Everest, without glancing at her, rose and prepared to go. He explained to Miss Duprée that they had a long journey before

them, and that he thought they would have to prepare for it by taking all the rest they could get. When Dorothy showed no sign of rebelling, he looked relieved, and in a moment the girl and her stepfather were making their slow way toward the door. The passageway happened to be quite crowded, and they were forced to stand a few moments wedged in among a number of others before they could reach the stairs.

Neither Dorothy nor Colonel Everest said one word, and so it was not strange that the voice of some one behind them, speaking in a loud undertone, should reach their ears with a clearness and distinctness that could not be avoided. It was Fanny Bergen who spoke.

"There! That's him! He married Dorothy's mother, and she hates him, and he has a daughter, and she hates her, too. And she calls 'em 'interlopers,' because they—oh, bother! School's over now and I'm not going to fuss over definitions, but you know what it is, and—and—"

Here, happily, the block was cleared, and they were enabled to make their way up the stairs and out of the hearing of that dreadful voice.

Neither Dorothy nor her stepfather spoke.

The girl, amid all her shame and mortification, scarcely saw where she stepped, and blundered on blindly until she almost slipped on the edge of a polished stair. Then Colonel Everest's hand was upon her arm and he was saying kindly:

"My dear, do you think you can be ready to start at nine o'clock in the morning? Yes? Well, then, good-night and God bless you."

Dorothy stood at the head of the corridor leading to her room and looked after him as he passed out of sight. As she watched him she was filled with a sudden impulse to run after him and beg, at least, for his forgiveness, but she delayed too long, and the next moment she heard the heavy front door close after him, and it was too late.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE JOURNEY

SHE crept into bed without saying her prayers, as she was accustomed to do, kneeling beneath her mother's picture. That picture had served her for two years, instead of her mother's knee at which she used to pray, and she had grown to feel that it had something of the beloved presence itself, and told it all her secrets, all her disappointments, and all her pleasures. But to-night, just because she had grown to feel that in speaking to it she was almost speaking to her mother herself, she could not approach it at all. In fact she felt more like hiding her face from the innocent thing, whose eyes seemed silently asking: "How can you hurt me so through one I love?" and she could not answer.

She tried to justify herself to her conscience by repeating: "I can't help it. I don't want to be horrid. I'd love to be good, but I can't when everything is going so criss-cross."

In the midst of her brooding she fell asleep, and only wakened upon hearing the early gong clang out loud and clear its signal to rise.

She had only to dress herself and slip a few little necessities into her hand-bag to be quite ready for her journey, for her trunk stood locked and strapped beside the wall, kind Miss Lorimer having packed it the day before, and her dress was to be folded away by itself and sent home in its own especial box.

Every one was in a flutter during breakfast. Trunks were being carried down-stairs, checks were being delivered, questions asked and no answers given, and in the midst of all, the stage lumbered up, and then the hurly-burly grew more confusing still.

"Good-by! Good-by!" "Write to me, Fan!" "Remember Hillside in August, Paul!" "Be sure and let me know when to come, Kate!" "Good-by! Good-by!"

Then Dorothy, feeling not at all so glad to leave the place as she had supposed she would be, kissed every one good-by, was lifted into a coach and off they went amid quite a chorus of good wishes and farewells, to the usual bustle and confusion of the station and then into the

quiet and quite unusual luxury of the drawing-room car into which the Colonel led her. Dorothy had never been used to traveling in so comfortable a fashion. The spacious aisles, the ample windows with their gleaming plate-glass panes and the elegance of every little appointment were novel and delightful to her. She leaned back against the tufted cushions of her chair and realized that she was very well off indeed. And as time went on she found that she had a most attentive escort. Books, flowers, fruit and candy all found their way into her lap during the next few hours, and she could hardly believe it when the porter came and announced that luncheon was being served in the dining-car. Then there was the fun of eating one's daintily served meal between glimpses of flashing scenery and the sense of flying through space, and having only to choose what one wanted to find it at one's plate. Colonel Everest did not try to make her talk. He looked after her comfort and saw that she lacked nothing, but he took it for granted that when she was ready she would speak and until then he was quite satisfied to wait. He read his papers and glanced over the magazines in



silence, and after Dorothy had skimmed through a story, eaten all the candy she wanted and grown tired of the taste of fruit, she found herself wishing very much that her stepfather would throw aside his paper and amuse her. She glanced at him several times from between her half-shut lids, but he was deep in some stupid editorial and paid no attention. She could not help owning to herself that he was handsome, and when he smiled his eyes lit up in a way that was fairly delightful. But she had not seen his smile for a long, long time; not since he bade good-by to the kind Seminary ladies who had shown him so much attention and good-will. As he was now, his face was stern and grave, and she certainly could not expect him to smile at her when he knew she "hated" him and had called him an "interloper." But he might at least amuse her. She was tired of sitting there doing nothing. It hurt her eyes to read the light flashed so, and the motion of the train was beginning to make her feel sick. She flung her head back with a sigh of irritation.

"What can I do for you?" asked Colonel Everest, quietly, letting his paper fall and

regarding her kindly. "Will you have more magazines? Another book? No more candy, I suppose, since you have not made away with what you have, and I am glad, for I do not believe in too many sweets."

She shook her head silently. She would have liked to say "Please talk to me," but she did not dare, for though his eyes were kind enough, they did not smile, and when his face was serious she was—yes, afraid of him. He took her at her word, or rather deed, and without more ado returned to his paper. The slow tears began to gather in her eyes, and she had to stare very hard out of the window to keep them from falling. Then, little by little, the movement of the car, the rumble of its wheels, and the fatigue of her own little body worked on her and she drowsed off into a dreamless sleep. Her face was still turned toward the window, and the lowering sun sent oblique golden flashes directly upon her closed lids. Colonel Everest waited a moment until she was fairly dozing and then rose and drew down the shade and pulled the curtains to. Then he slipped a hassock under her feet, and having lifted the book from her lap, lest it fall from her loosened fingers

and disturb her, he went back to his own place and sat there quite motionless, seemingly well pleased to let his paper rest for a while. As she slept, Dorothy's cheeks grew pink and her pretty hair damp and curling about the temples. Her stepfather smiled as he looked at her.

"A dear little face," he said to himself. "Agnes didn't tell me she was so pretty, and those photographs she has don't begin to do the child justice. But she seems to have an unfortunate disposition. I hope she won't take a dislike to Helen as she has to me, for evidently she takes no trouble to hide her feelings, and poor little Helen is so sensitive it would go hard with her. However, we'll hope for the best, and certainly it shall not be our fault if things go wrong."

A sudden recollection set his eyes to twinkling. He was recalling Dorothy's expression when he declined Mrs. Pollock's invitation for her.

"She shot a look at me that was warranted to kill at forty paces," he thought with an inward chuckle of amusement. "It was deadly. And then the air with which she walked off! I declare it was no less than tragic. Poor little

soul! She did not stop long enough to discover how her brutal stepfather concluded the business. Ah, well! never mind. I'll tell Agnes not to inform her, and so when August comes she'll have a surprise."

He did not realize that while he was musing his eyes were fixed on Dorothy's face. The steady gaze seemed to draw her back to consciousness. She stirred, turned her head quickly and her eyes and the Colonel's met. For a second she forgot where she was and with whom, and when he smiled encouragingly at her she smiled back again. But as soon as she had time to recollect the thought popped into her head that since he hadn't smiled at her before, when she was awake, this smile must be the remnant of something he had been indulging in at her expense while she was asleep. Of course! He'd been watching and making fun of her all the while and laughing.

"I s'pose he thought 'there's that great girl, falling asleep in the cars like a baby.' Who knows? Maybe I had my mouth open! Oh, dear!"

Her forehead suddenly went into a tangle of wrinkles and she turned her face away with a

scowl of disgust. The Colonel returned to his paper and did not lay it down again until they were nearing their journey's end.

She was glad enough to gather herself together and begin collecting her belongings, as she saw the other passengers doing, but in spite of the attentions of the colored porter, who flourished a whisk-broom energetically about her dress and sack, she felt dusty and soiled, and anything but amiable. But all things come to an end and so at last did this long journey, and Dorothy, looking rather pale and fagged, stepped out of the car and followed her stepfather through the huge, resounding station to the street, where they got into a cab and were whirled away in the fast-fading sunlight along the hot, dusty streets of New York.

Colonel Everest let down the carriage windows and in came the summer breeze, which blew with sweet freshness over their tired faces and travel-stained garments. Dorothy had scarcely spoken to her companion all through the journey, but now she said, somewhat irritably :

"I don't even know where she is."

Colonel Everest evidently guessed at once who "she" was, for he replied :

"At the Plaza. I left them there until we should return. As soon as you are rested we shall all go home."

"Home!" Dorothy did not remember when she had had a "home." To her home was where her mother happened to be, but now her mother was at the hotel, and still that was not, evidently, what the Colonel meant when he said they would go home.

He glanced quickly at her wistful face and replied to the question in her eyes.

"I have a place on the Hudson, rather a nice old house, I think, and I have had it made ready for us. I hope you will like it. You and Helen can have your horses to drive, and there is some sort of river-craft, I believe, that you can paddle about in—or, at least, there used to be when I was a boy. Yes, I hope you will like it and be happy there."

For a moment Dorothy was silent. Then she said:

"If my mother is there I shall like it. I'm always happy where she is."

She had just time to hear her stepfather say, "So am I"—and no more for any of her contrary little speeches, when they reached the

hotel. She never knew how she got to their rooms. She had dim visions of an elevator, and a hall-boy, and a knock upon a closed door, and then—the door flew open, she was caught in some one's arms, and was hiding her face against some one's bosom and crying, "O mamma, mamma!" without a thought of any thing or any one else.

Then she seemed to be conscious, in a vague, uncertain sort of way, of a slender figure slipping past them and out of the door, closing it gently behind her—but who she was or why she went, Dorothy did not know nor care. It was enough that she was clinging about her mother's neck and hearing the dear voice, for which she had hungered so long, saying, "Little Dorothy! Darling daughter!"

"O, mamma, mamma!" All the pent-up longing of the last two years seemed to have come surging up into her heart at once, and in spite of herself she could not keep the sobs down. "O, mamma, mamma!" she cried, over and over again, clinging closer and pressing to her own the dear, tear-wet cheek.

It seemed to her that she had never before realized how she had missed her mother. "I

needed you—I needed you,” she sobbed. “And I kept counting the weeks and you didn’t come—and you didn’t come; and then—” But just here the thought of what had happened “then” made her wince and she hastened to crush down the recollection with another hug. “But I have you now,” she cried, with a fierce sort of defiance in her voice. “And no one shall take you away from me again—no one, no one!”

Mrs. Everest laughed reassuringly. “No one wants to, dearie. We are to be like the ‘crooked little man,’ in the jingle—we’ll ‘all live together in a crooked little house.’ It will be, oh, so blessed! Just think, Dorothy, aren’t we rich and fortunate to have a home and so much love given to us, you and I?”

Dorothy bit her lips and shook her head. “I don’t want anybody but just you,” she insisted, “nobody—nobody!” There was a savage little ring in her voice that startled her mother. She looked up quickly into the girl’s face just in time to catch the challenging flash in her eyes. Mrs. Everest dimly felt that there were breakers ahead, and her smile grew anxious and uncertain as she looked at the girl’s tightly-set lips. When she went abroad she left Dorothy



a mere child. Now she was a grown girl, and her mother saw in a twinkling that she would have to be reckoned with: she felt it with a heart-stinging self-reproach. And yet she had meant to act for the best.

"Mammady, I honestly believe you aren't glad to have me back. It's not fair! You ought to be laughing all over with joy."

Mrs. Everest looked up with a smile. "Not glad to have you back, little daughter? If you only knew how glad I am. It wasn't your being back, it was your having been away at all that made me sober. But here, we are forgetting everything about time and toilets. You'll want to make yourself tidy, after your long trip, before we go down to dinner, pussy. So hop up and go to your room—through 'hat door there, to the right. Everything is ready for you."

Dorothy sprang to her feet with a happy laugh, and then bent over to give her mother another sounding kiss.

"Oh, you dear, you dear!" she exclaimed, joyously, clasping her about in a sort of awkward bear-hug. In her happiness she had forgotten all about the "interlopers"—all about

everything but her mother and the joy of seeing her again. So, when Mrs. Everest responded to a gentle tap upon the door with a hearty "Come in, Helen," Dorothy gave a great start of surprise, and the smile faded out of her face in an instant.

A tall, slender girl appeared in the doorway. She stood one moment upon the sill, as if trying to gain courage to come forward. Then she took a few rapid steps toward where they were, opened her arms, and, her tender eyes growing large and soft with love, said, wistfully, "Oh, Dorothy—little sister—I'm so glad you've come home. Won't you try to—love me, please?"

For an instant Dorothy was silent, as much from astonishment as anything else. She, herself, never could have addressed a stranger so—never in the world. She gazed at Helen with eyes of wonder, and, to tell the truth, suspicion, and drew back with a cold little smile out of the range of the outstretched hands.

"Thank you," she managed to murmur.

Helen's arms fell at her sides and the light in her eyes went out as suddenly as if it had been a candle-flame and some one had blown roughly upon it. There was a painful pause

which made Dorothy feel guilty and responsible. She shrugged her shoulders impatiently, turned to her mother with a careless laugh, and said :

"I guess I'd better go to my room now. I want to take a bath. I'm dirtier than I'm tired, and I'm hungrier than I'm either." Then before there was time for another word she was gone.

As her mother had said, everything was in readiness for her and she dawdled unnecessarily over her dressing, quite unmindful of the fact that she was keeping the others waiting. At length her mother appeared at her bed-room door.

"Dorothy, it is late. We must go down," she said with a note of rebuke in her voice and without a smile.

"Yes'm, I'm ready. Oh, mammady, I do believe, in spite of what you say, that you aren't glad to have me back," cried the girl, making a little rush at her and flinging her sound arm about her neck. This time Mrs. Everest made no reply, other than to press her cheek fondly upon the plump hand beneath her chin. But Dorothy was more unsatisfied than ever ; something, she told herself, had come between them—and of course it was "the interlopers."

The little party made its way down to the dining-room, and the music and lights soon brought the flush back to her cheeks and before she knew it she had forgotten her grievance, and was telling jokes and funny stories of Seminary scrapes until she had her companions laughing with flattering appreciation, and the Colonel threatened to have the waiter "remove" Helen if she did not stop choking in her soup. But neither her stepfather nor his daughter made any more advances to her, and Dorothy understood that she would not be troubled by undue attentions from them in the future. She said to herself that certainly it would be a great comfort if they let her alone, and yet, somehow, the prospect did not altogether please her either. She felt as she had done in the train when her stepfather was reading his paper and she wanted him to amuse her.

The evening was cool and clear, and after dinner Colonel Everest proposed that they "all take a stroll on the Avenue," and when they started out he, of his own accord, went ahead with Helen, leaving Dorothy and his wife to walk a pace behind them. The girl slipped her hand through her mother's arm, and for a second or

two they kept step in silence. But silence seldom lasted long where Dorothy was, and she soon began to chatter about all sorts of subjects—the girls, the Seminary, anything and everything but the couple just ahead.

Mrs. Everest listened to her and let her talk, but the girl knew that her mother was getting ready to say a word on her own account, and presently she gave her the chance by breaking off abruptly with the exclamation :

“Oh, me! You’re not half listening to what I say. I don’t believe you heard a word.”

Mrs. Everest did not apologize. Instead she said directly :

“No, dear, to be altogether frank with you, I have not been very attentive. But you can’t expect me to think of what you are saying now when my mind is so full of what you said a while ago.”

“A while ago?”

“Yes; you know what I mean. What you said to poor little Helen.”

Dorothy’s shoulders instantly straightened and she gave a sniff of disdain. “Poor little Helen,” indeed! But she only said :

“I don’t know what you mean. I haven’t

spoken more than a couple of words to her, that I remember. Let's see—she came in and said—”

“Never mind what she said,” broke in her mother, quickly. “She offered you her love, Dorothy, and you threw it back at her. That is enough. I could not have believed it of you, my daughter, that you could so forget yourself—so forget that I had tried to bring you up to be a lady.”

The quiet words cut deep.

“Why, Mammady Day!” the girl burst out impulsively and then stopped short. “I—oh—” she stammered, “I don't know what you mean—by my forgetting—things. I said ‘thank you,’ didn't I? Isn't ‘thank you’ ladylike?”

Her mother looked down into her eyes and for a second neither spoke, but Dorothy had the grace to blush.

“Well, I know it,” she burst out at last. “But I couldn't say I'd love her, could I, when I don't—know whether I shall or not? And now I see why he left us together like this. I thought it was kindness, but he wanted you to lecture me. She went and tattle-taled, and so he made you promise to lecture me. I declare,

it's the meanest thing I ever heard of. My first evening back, too! And after this it'll always be so. It'll never be as it used to be again. We'll never be left together any more unless they want me to be lectured, and nothing I do will ever suit either of 'em, and you'll always think I'm to blame and there'll be no one to stand up for me—and, oh, dear, I wish I was—”

What she wished she was remained a mystery, for just here Colonel Everest turned and remarked that as Dorothy must be pretty tired after her long journey he thought it would be a wise move if they hailed a 'bus and rode home, that she might get to bed early if she chose to do so, and thus be well rested in the morning.

She was glad enough of the interruption, for she knew that her mother would not let her outburst go unrebuked, and she felt as if she could not endure another word just then.

She went to her room as soon as possible and shut herself in, determined to be just as miserable as she chose, for the rest of the night. But the moment her cheek touched the pillow she forgot all her woes and drifted off into a tranquil, restful sleep.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOME

"WELL, Dorothy, how do you like it?"

"Oh, mamma dear, it's just the loveliest place in the world. Did you ever see such a dear old house? Why, I feel as if I had stepped way back into the time of Washington and Lafayette and those splendid folks, with all these darling spindle-legged chairs and great big fireplaces and galleries and things. I didn't know there was such a scrumbunctuous old house outside of a story-book. Of course I know they had 'em in olden times, but I thought they had all—well, I don't know what I thought had become of 'em. But this one! Did you ever see such thick stone walls and such jolly wide windows? Why, I can sit on the sill of mine lengthwise and have room to spare."

Her mother shook her head, while her eyes shone with pleasure at Dorothy's delight. "Well, you will please not sit in the window-



sills lengthwise, pussy, or there'll be an accident, and we don't want any tragic stories connected with Adelhurst. It has plenty of fine old tales of its own, so there is no need of adding one of a mangled maiden to the list."

"Oh, I'll take care of that," cried Dorothy, gayly. "But it's as much as I can do to help hanging out of the window all the time. I never saw such a beautiful view. That river is just splendiferous. It is the best fun in the world to watch the boats. Why, you don't begin to know how many I've seen just in this mite of a while we've been here. Big ones and little ones, and every sort of shape."

"Then you are pleased with your room?"

"Pleased! Well, I should say so," returned the girl, looking at the pretty chamber with sparkling eyes.

"Then I wish," said her mother gently, "that you would tell your father so. He has done so much for you that I think you should at least say 'Thank you, papa!'"

The girl's forehead wrinkled and she pressed her lips together obstinately. Mrs. Everest saw, and did not push the subject farther. She turned to go out of the room, unpinning her hat

and veil as she went. But before she reached the threshold Dorothy had called after her, "Oh, mammady D—dear, of course I'll say 'thank you!' Do you s'pose I want people to think I haven't any manners. I guess I know:—

"'Come when you're called ;  
Do as you're bid ;  
Shut the door after you ; never be chid ;  
Speak when you're spoken to ;  
Hold up your head ;  
Turn out your toes and go smiling to bed.'"

Her mother looked back at her with an uncertain smile. She was not entirely satisfied that Dorothy's "thank you" would sound like an expression of gratitude.

The family was given just time to get settled, and then the visiting began. Neighbors from all about came to welcome them, and the girls were kept busy making new acquaintances and trying to keep track of the old, who claimed friendship with the Colonel dating from his boyhood.

"Oh, dear! I never can remember their names!" lamented Helen. "And they look me over and say, 'Dear me! How much she looks like her father!' And then another one says, 'Oh, do you think so? I think she is the

image of her grandmother.' 'Really! Well, now I come to look at her, perhaps she is.' 'She has the Colonel's nose.' 'But her mouth is precisely like her mother's people. Her mouth is a regular Verplanck mouth!' 'Why, so it is. But I should never have known her; she's grown so!' They pick me all to pieces, and, of course, I've grown—it would be a pity if I hadn't all these years I've been in Boulogne. The next time any one comes mayn't I stay up-stairs, papa, even if they do ask for me?"

Colonel Everest laughed out, and shook his head energetically.

"I'm afraid not, daughter," he replied, flashing a look at his wife. "But don't despair. It will soon be over; and, besides, you are not the only victim. Mamma is having to pass muster, too, and she stands it like a hero—ine."

"Pass muster!" echoed Dorothy. "What does that mean?"

The Colonel and Mrs. Everest exchanged another glance, and both of them laughed.

"Papa means people are curious about me. I'm being looked over to see if I shall do," her mother replied, mischievously.

"Do? Do what? And why are they curious about you?"

"Because every one is anxious to see what sort of a woman papa has brought home to be mistress of Adelhurst. And they want to see if I shall do—to associate with."

Dorothy's eyes flashed angrily, and she jumped to her feet with a savage little spring.

"Do! You do for them to associate with! Well, I like that! I guess my mother is good enough for anybody to associate with—the Queen of England or anybody! How perfectly impudent of them to come and wonder such things! I guess Adelhurst may be glad it's got you as a mistress. I guess there isn't a place in the whole world that oughtn't to be proud to have you for its mistress—so there!"

"Right, Dorothy!" exclaimed her stepfather with a resounding heartiness, and he smiled down at her so cordially as he spoke that actually her two dimples came out and, in spite of herself, she smiled up in return. Way down in her heart she had meant her words for him; to show him—she wasn't very clear as to why she meant to show him—that "her mother was as good as anybody and that his friends and

people needn't come inspecting her, she'd like to have them know." And here he was "chim-ing in" with her, and just as eager to "stand up" for her mother as she was herself. It took all the wind out of her sails—and the angry flush out of her cheeks. "Well, I don't care," she confessed half shame-facedly, "I don't think it's nice for people to do such things; to go round looking at other people through long-handled eye-glasses as if they were pieces of calico over a counter and there might be a chance of their being too coarse."

The Colonel threw back his head and laughed again.

"My dear young lady," he said, "that's precisely the point. There is a chance of their being too coarse. If every woman were as fine as your mother, there would be no necessity for picking and choosing, but unfortunately many and many an one is like—well, the sort of calico one wouldn't buy. I've met quite a number of calico-ladies, my dear, in my day and generation. They looked very attractive on the counter—but when one came to look closer they 'wouldn't wash.' Wise people don't choose calico for its pretty pattern alone. They make sure

that the colors will hold and that the thread is fine. And if our callers seem to imply a slight toward any one, it is toward me.'

Dorothy looked up with questioning eyes and Helen said, "How, papa?"

"Because they have the faintest doubt as to the quality of the lady I would choose," he said, seriously.

His wife took the hand he slipped half teasingly beneath her chin and pressed her cheek against it, just as she was in the habit of doing to Dorothy's. For a second the girl felt an angry sense of jealous resentment against them both, but she tried to hide it by turning her face away and saying sharply:

"Well, I despise those long-handled eye-glass things anyhow. When they hold 'em up and examine me through 'em I feel like dirt under their feet. Some day, if they don't look out, I'll make a face at them when they're squinting at me through 'em, and then they'll see something worth while."

"Dorothy, Dorothy! What a lot of pronouns!" laughed her mother. "One doesn't know whether you are speaking of the ladies, the lorgnettes, or—the lassie. And if you really

did as you threaten, I'm afraid you would show that you are calico with a very coarse thread indeed; and we don't want our daughters to be of anything but the finest texture, do we, papa?"

There were plenty of girls of about their own age in the neighborhood, but only a few of whom they cared to make companions. Helen was too shy to form friendships readily, and Dorothy had very little patience with many of the "airs they put on," and preferred, on the whole, to go her own way with Helen in attendance, and find her amusement where she could. To be sure Helen was "slow," besides being an "interloper," but at least she did not brag and she was not conceited and "stuck-up."

"Do you like Elizabeth Barclay?" she demanded of Helen, one day after they had just seen that young lady spin down the road in her machine.

"Why, I don't know," returned gentle Helen. "Kind of. Why?"

"She's a perfect nuisance," announced Dorothy, bluntly. "She's been here about two hours, and she hasn't done a living thing but talk about money and clothes, and—oh, nonsense. Catch Marie Pollock behaving so, and

her father's as rich as Mr. Barclay ever dared to be. Marie is just as nice as she can be, and you'd never know they had a cent from the way she acts. Her dresses are as plain as—well, as mine are, and she's always ladylike and polite and sensible. Sometimes Elizabeth is good fun, but when she gets going on as she did just now I want to shake her till every tooth in her head chatters. Now Marie's never silly. She's just jolly and dear, and I love it when she's around. Oh, sugar! I wish I could see her this minute. I could, too—not this minute exactly, but in August—if—if—”

“Well?” ventured Helen.

“If I could have gone to their house as they wanted me to,” snapped Dorothy, her lips setting irritably at the mere recollection of how her stepfather had “mixed in” and interfered with her pleasure.

Helen was anxiously casting about for something to say that would give the conversation another turn when they heard the sound of wheels coming around the drive. It was Helen's phaeton, and as fat little Fidgets, the pony, hove in sight, Dorothy gave way to a great groan of dismay.



"Oh, my stars!" exclaimed she. "Have we got to trundle behind that thing again this afternoon? When you were about it, why didn't you get a horse instead of a tame cat?"

Helen looked grieved. She stepped down to the ground and patted Fidgets's neck as if to make up for Dorothy's slight. "He isn't a tame cat, are you, pony dear?" she rejoined, consolingly.

"All he's good for," again began Dorothy, in high disgust, "is to eat. He eats oats, or whatever they feed 'em, all the morning and in the afternoon when you take him out he eats grass; he eats it all along the road."

"Why, he does not," contradicted Helen, staunchly. "When he stops going and puts his nose down to the ground that way, he's smelling the flowers. Fidgets likes flowers, don't you, lovey?"

But Dorothy was not to be convinced, and caught up her hat with a vicious grab. "Oh, well! if we've got to go, let's go and get it over with," she snapped, ungraciously.

Helen fastened on her hat and silently took her place in the phaeton, Dorothy flouncing in before her and dropping on the seat with a

thump that threatened the carriage springs. She would have liked to grasp the ribbons and the foolish, decorated whip and set Fidgets to scurrying down the path at a great rate. But in Helen's hands the reins were worse than useless and the whip was a mere protection to Fidgets against flies.

They meandered out of the gate and down the road, the fringe on the parasol-top of the little carriage hardly stirring in the still, hot air.

Dorothy leaned back and looked bored.

Helen leaned forward and flicked a fly from Fidget's neck. Neither of the girls spoke. They went down the same road they had taken yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that; up a gentle rise of ground and down a narrow lane; out upon the main road again and along the lovely river bank. Under any other conditions Dorothy would have gloried in the magnificent view, and the chance to indulge her fondness for "all out-doors." But to be fastened down to this exasperating phaeton, with its sleepy pony, and the same monotonous jog-trot, against her will, put her out of all patience.

"I wish to goodness you'd go down that way,"

she broke out passionately, after she had silently borne the sense of persecution as long as she could endure it.

"Why? What's the use?" asked Helen, mildly. "We know this way, and besides, there might be tramps down there."

"So there might be up here."

"But it's so open and nice here. You can see all round. What's the good of going another way?"

"Just for a change—something new. Don't you ever want to do things except one way, Helen Everest? Goodness gracious, it makes me wild to trundle after Fidgets at the same time every day along the same old road. It wouldn't be so bad if you saw different things."

"But how can you see different things?" cried Helen, appealingly. "There's nothing different to see. All there is, is grass and flowers and the river and the sky. No matter where you go you see 'em just the same."

Dorothy gazed at her with eyes full of amazement. Then she gave a great sigh of resignation and turned her face away.

Poor Helen felt that she had in some way made a blunder, and her fingers trembled a little

as she flapped the reins loosely upon Fidgets's back. Then suddenly she sat up straight, grasped the ribbons more firmly and turned the pony's head.

Dorothy started up. "What are you doing?" she asked quickly.

"Turning Fidgets round. We'll drive the way you wanted to go, Dorothy," she returned gently.

Fidgets protested vigorously at the change of direction, shook himself in his harness, planted his feet firmly where he stood and refused to stir. But Helen was determined for once, and tweaked steadily at the reins till he craned his neck to look reproachfully at her from between his blinders, when she actually wagged the whip in his face, and he thought better of the situation and obediently turned about and went in the direction she wished.

"Now, isn't this a nice way to go?" demanded Dorothy presently, after they had turned down a shady by-path into a lane flanked on both sides by silvery willows. "This is the prettiest road I've seen anywhere about here, so cool and shadowy. See how the branches arch over our heads. I think willows are just beauty-trees;

I mean this kind. The bark is so gray and soft and the branches are so misty."

"That one over there looks dead," observed Helen, critically. "The roots are all out of the ground and there's a big crack in the trunk."

"Maybe it was struck by lightning."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Helen, glancing up anxiously through the ceiling of shimmering boughs to the cloudless sky above their heads.

Dorothy laughed. "Oh, but you are a 'fraid-cat," she declared, carelessly. The other girl did not deny it. She simply said: "Well, I can't help it if I am; I have always been so."

"That's no reason; not even an excuse," returned Dorothy, quoting Miss Duprée even to the note of severity in her voice. "You ought to break yourself of it. It isn't womanly to be afraid of things; it just makes you ridiculous and other people uncomfortable."

To do her justice, Dorothy meant no harm by her words, but Helen winced as if she had received a hurt and her face turned very pale. She did not dare look up, for there was a cloud in her eyes that she would not have cared to have her stepsister see.

There was a queer, cracking, snapping sound

in her ears, too, and she thought she must be going to faint, she felt so strange and numb. Then suddenly she felt herself thrust powerfully to the floor of the phaeton, the ribbons were torn from her hand, and she heard the whip-lash cut through the air in fierce, whistling strokes on poor little Fidgets's quivering haunches. The maddened pony sprang forward and the phaeton lurched after him, its wheels leaping the ground as though they were alive.

There was the sound of a strained, hoarse cry, and the cracking and snapping in Helen's ears grew to a deafening roar, which ended in a crash that shook the ground. Then, after a moment, Fidgets ceased plunging and stood quite still in the silence. Helen was not altogether sure she was alive; her heart was beating madly and she crouched where she had been thrust, too frightened and stunned to rise, and too full of dread to dare face what had happened or might be going to happen. The first thing she was really aware of was Dorothy's voice saying, quietly:

"You can get up now. It's all over."

Then Helen's shoulders began to shake, and she found herself sobbing wildly.

"You can get up now," repeated Dorothy. "It's all over." She thrust her hand beneath her stepsister's arm and supported her back into her place.

"What—what is it—oh, what is it?" gasped Helen, between choking breaths.

"Nothing much," returned Dorothy, in a voice that was scarcely recognizable as her own. "Just one of the dead branches. It broke off at the trunk, and would have come slashing down on us if—we hadn't got out of the way."

Helen's crying abruptly ceased, and she turned her head to look where Dorothy was already looking.

Behind them, so near that its outer twigs brushed the carriage wheels, lay a huge limb of one of the wayside willows. It had fallen slantingly across the path, and even in the midst of her panic Helen could see that it was almost by a miracle that they had escaped.

"It would have killed us," she said in an awed whisper.

Dorothy nodded and stooped over to pat Fidgets's haunches; the poor little animal was still trembling from fright, and needed to be reassured.

"Then it was that I heard snapping and crackling?"

"Uh-huh. I s'pose so."

"And you saw it—saw it falling?"

"Yes."

"And you—what did you push me down under you for?"

Dorothy gazed thoughtfully at the dashboard, and did not answer.

"What did you push me down under you for?" repeated Helen, persistently.

"To get you out of the way."

"But—but if—if you hadn't been able to make Fidgets go fast enough, and that thing had come down on us—it—it would have struck you first?"

"I s'pose so."

"Oh, Dorothy!"

Dorothy gave the ribbons a slight tug, and the wheels began to revolve slowly. "I guess some of these trees are just about dead, after all," she said, looking speculatively up at them, while Helen shuddered and grasped her arm. "Now that I look at them, the branches are all rotted away—see that one? It's splintered off close to the trunk. This lane is pretty enough to look at, but I guess we'd better drive the old way to-morrow."



## CHAPTER X

### TALKING THINGS OVER

ELIZABETH BARCLAY hailed them on their way home with a shout as she put the brake on her auto and slackened her speed to keep pace with the pony, who hung back more than ever going down hill.

"Oh, girls!" she panted, "I have just been up to your house, and I left a message with Hilda and your mother. First I gave it to Hilda, and then your mother came down and I gave it to her over again, and now I'll give it to you straight. 'What I tell you three times is true,' you know. I want you to come and take luncheon at my house on Monday. A girl I know from New York is coming to make me a visit, and I want to amuse her—I mean I'd like to have you meet her. She's a most particular friend of mine, and we're as intimate as can be. Her father is president of the New York and California Road, and they have stacks of money. They're awfully swell, too, and go in the best

society. Her mother belongs to one of the oldest families in New York, and mamma says there's no girl in town better worth cultivating than Eleanor Olney."

Dorothy, who had listened to Elizabeth's tiresome description with a contemptuous curl of the lip and a languid look of bored indifference, suddenly gave a little start of surprise and sat up straight in her place.

"Eleanor Olney!" she repeated.

Elizabeth looked at her in some surprise. "Yes. Why? What's the matter? Do you know her?"

Dorothy laughed. "Know her? Oh, no. I've never met her; at least not since we were little bits of tots. But she's a relation of mine. That is, her mother and mamma are first cousins or something."

"Why, how nice!" exclaimed Elizabeth, in a tone that showed clearly that she didn't think it was nice at all. The truth was, she did not relish the idea of Dorothy's having a superior claim on her "swell" friend; but that was something she did not wish the girls to discover, and so she began to quicken her pace to be out of the range of their eyes.

"Well, I must be off," she called over her shoulder, as the space between them widened. "You'll come then, won't you?"

"Oh, I guess so," Dorothy shouted back brusquely, and a few seconds later Elizabeth had passed out of sight over the rim of the hill.

"I wonder whether mamma will want to have us go?" speculated Helen, after they had watched the sparkling machine rise and dip at the ridge in the road as though it had been carried forward on the crest of a wave. "She never said so, but I don't believe she approves of Elizabeth much."

"Oh, I guess she'll let us go," Dorothy returned, laughing. "'She never said so,' but I guess she thinks we're old enough to take care of ourselves."

Helen rearranged the reins between her fingers and shook them loosely on Fidgets's back.

"If you and Eleanor Olney are cousins, how is it you haven't seen each other for so many years?" she asked presently. "Cousins are pretty well acquainted generally."

Dorothy stopped humming and replied: "Oh, I don't know; not always. Besides, I

didn't say she was my cousin. It's her mother and mamma who are cousins. I've been at school and she's been at school, and our mothers—well, I'm sure I don't know whether our mothers like each other much or not. S'pose they do, though. Mamma's so dear she finds something to like in most every one, and I don't see how anybody could help loving her."

"Then you think you'll go?"

"Oh, I guess so."

"If you do I will. But I don't want to go alone."

Dorothy's eyes twinkled. "You are an awful copy-cat, Helen Everest," she declared, but her tone was by no means unkind and her stepsister was not at all offended by her words. Instead she laughed quietly and returned:

"Well, I can't help it if I am. You can talk and make quick speeches, and that sort of keeps things going, but when I'm alone I get so embarrassed I feel like going through the floor, and I'm certain sure people wish I'd go home, and yet I'm too scared to stir."

"Pooh! You can talk as well as anybody when you're with people who l—" Dorothy stopped suddenly short in the midst of her sen-

tence and coughed, "who listen to you," she concluded with an odd sort of catch in her voice.

Her stepsister did not contradict her, perhaps because just then she had to pilot Fidgets safely through the gate and into their own grounds, and it took all her skill to keep him in the middle of the gateway.

"He just loves to nestle against the posts," Dorothy observed, laughing derisively at her stepsister's struggles. "It's a pity you can't let him do it. It would only cost you a couple of wheels a day."

"Oh, Dorothy!" protested Helen, ashamed to join in the laugh, when it was at her pony's expense.

Their mother was awaiting them on the veranda and as they drove up before the house she asked, cheerily, if they had had a pleasant drive.

"Jolly!" returned Dorothy, ironically. "We sat behind Fidgets while he grazed and it was just too exciting for words; and then coming home Elizabeth Barclay overtook us—she had to scorch like anything to do it and keep up, I tell you—and she asked us to lunch at her house on Monday. She's going to have

company from New York, and who do you s'pose it is?"

Her mother shook her head in mystification while the two girls sprang out of the carriage and Fidgets was led away to the stable. "I'm sure I can't imagine," she said, evidently not trying very hard to do so.

"Why, Eleanor Olney."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes; and isn't it the greatest joke? When Elizabeth was praising her up so and bragging about her family and everything. It's the hugest joke!"

"Joke?" repeated her mother.

"Why, yes, because all the while she's my cousin, don't you see?"

Mrs. Everest lifted up the hat Dorothy had cast down, and began smoothing its ribbons and picking the flowers into place. "I may be very stupid," she admitted, "but I still don't see any joke."

"Oh, now, mamma, you're just putting on!" exclaimed Dorothy, rather provoked. "You must see that when Elizabeth was bragging about Eleanor, and trying to overpower us with her family and money and everything, that my

turning out to be her cousin puts another face on it ; that instead of Elizabeth being the important one, I am. The joke's on Elizabeth."

"But how," questioned Mrs. Everest, "can the fact of Eleanor's money and family and position give importance to either of you, even admitting, which I am not ready to do, that it gives it to Eleanor herself?"

Dorothy hesitated a moment, and Helen broke in: "Why, I s'pose Dorothy means that some one who has fine relations is better off than some one who has only fine friends."

Mrs. Everest smiled compassionately. "Ah! I see what you mean. You think one can shine in reflected glory, and you are satisfied to do it. I am afraid that I, personally, am a little too proud for that. I prefer to stand upon my own feet (as, when all is said and done one has to do anyway), and be accepted or rejected on my own merits. It is very delightful to have luxuries—no one can know that better than I who have for so many years had to do without them—and it is gratifying to know that one is well-born, but after all, the real thing is what one is one's self; and that cannot be affected by any such outside considerations, and it is not, in the minds

of the best people. Eleanor Olney may be a very lovely girl; I hope she is. But her money and her social position are not of her making, and therefore I don't quite see where her 'glory' comes in. Her grandfather was a shrewd business man, and the credit, if there is any, of his fortune is his. Eleanor could only, at best, shine in her father's reflection of it. And Dorothy claims to shine in the reflection of Eleanor's reflection of a reflection! As you girls say, 'I give it up.' It confuses me," and she gave a little laugh of pretended bewilderment and pinched Dorothy's chin with caressing fingers.

The girl blushed shamefacedly, and secretly wished she had curbed her impulse to score a point against Elizabeth and had let Eleanor's name go unnoticed.

"But you are Mrs. Olney's cousin, aren't you, mamma?" she asked a little anxiously.

"Yes, pussy. Her father and mine were brothers. We had the same grandfather. And a good old man he was, too. I am proud to remember how honest and brave and benevolent he was."

"Elizabeth made a great fuss about Mrs.



Olney's family," interposed Helen. "She said Eleanor's mother belonged to one of the oldest families in New York."

Mrs. Everest smiled. "She might go even farther away than that, if she liked, and say England. We come of English stock and some one has taken the trouble to trace our pedigree back to the time of the Crusaders, and I must admit I take great pride in that, because the Crusaders 'struck the death-blow to the feudal system and opened the way in Europe for the successful struggle for liberty.' It would be interesting to you to look up the feudal system, girls, and see just what it was. I can't do more than give you a general idea of it, but in a few words it was a system that gave authority and power to certain men—certain families—and placed them in the position of chiefs over the rest of the community, who were their vassals. It was not an agreeable system—for the vassals—and I am glad one of my ancestors helped to overthrow it. It would be deeply mortifying to me if I thought my own daughter looked on the corrupt old law with anything but scorn, or would tolerate what survives of it in society to-day."

Dorothy started. "Why, mamma! what do you mean?" she demanded hotly. "I don't see how I'm doing anything to make you think I'm tolerating anything."

"I mean," replied her mother, quite undisturbed by her vehemence, "that the moment you admit that mere wealth and social position give one man the right, as you say, to 'lord' it over another, you are tolerating that relic of mediævalism."

Dorothy and Helen looked at each other.

"You mean," said the elder girl at length, "that we had no right to think Eleanor Olney was a swell?"

Mrs. Everest laughed. "Yes, dear, if that is what you prefer to call it. As I said before, Eleanor Olney may be a lovely girl, and I repeat I hope she is, but she has no claim upon you or me or any one for anything beyond that. If she is good and brave I will respect her; but I refuse to respect her money, and I refuse to respect what Elizabeth calls her 'swellness.'"

"I should think so," Helen hastened to declare, "when you are every bit as swell as she is."

Before her mother could respond, Dorothy

had broken in with : " But I'd like to know why you and Mrs. Olney don't write letters to each other and visit and all that. Did you ever quarrel with her ?"

" No, my dear, certainly not. The reason Eleanor's mother and I are not, and have never been, intimate is—ah, well—our tastes are different, that is all."

" You mean she likes things you don't like ?"

" Yes."

" Pooh ! I shouldn't think that would keep you apart. I like heaps of things Marie Pollock has no use for, and yet we're as fond of each other as can be."

Mrs. Everest did not reply and Dorothy gave her a searching glance. " I know what you mean," she cried, suddenly. " You mean things that really count."

Her mother nodded.

" Like money and—and feudal systems and those ?"

" Yes."

" Oh !"

" Well, I can tell you one thing," interposed Helen, reflectively. " You'd respect Dorothy if you knew what she did to-day."

Mrs. Everest looked up with quick gratitude for the generous words and tone, but Dorothy flushed a deep crimson.

"If you're starting out to tattle I'm going away," she snapped, in real annoyance.

"Dorothy!" protested her mother, seeing Helen's eager look change to one of injury and bewilderment.

"Why, I didn't think you'd mind," the elder girl meekly said. "I should think you'd like mamma to know—"

"Well, I don't, so there! But as long as you've said so much you may as well go on and tell the rest," then without waiting for Helen to speak she continued: "The whole thing was—I wanted H—her to drive a new way to-day and she didn't like to, and I s'pose she gave in because—well, because she always acts like a scared goose and lets people have their own way, as if they'd murder her if she didn't, and after we got into the lane, coming back, one of the trees—they're all dead there anyhow—dropped a branch and I made Fidgets dodge, and—and—that's all there was about it. It was my fault and I'm sorry, and I think it's right down a mean to bring it all up again and get

me blamed for being contrary and obstinate and all that."

"Oh, Dorothy!" cried Helen, "you know that wasn't what I meant. You can't believe I meant that? Oh, mamma, I never meant to get her blamed. I wanted you to know how brave she was and how she—"

"If you say another word," blazed Dorothy fiercely, "I'll never speak to you again, Helen Everest!"

Her mother put out her hand and laid it gently on the angry girl's shoulder. But she let that be her only rebuke. After a moment Dorothy grabbed up her hat and swept savagely into the house, and Helen and her mother were left to gaze at one another in silence, till the girl's eyes filled and she turned them away.

"Never mind, dear! Don't grieve!"

The child sobbed soundlessly into her handkerchief. Her mother caught her hand and drew her tenderly into her lap.

"Such a big daughter," she murmured caressingly, and then she bent her head and whispered words of consolation into the girl's ear.

"I know it," said Helen at last, smiling wistfully through her tears, "but I can't help it.

I can't help minding. Sometimes we seem to be getting on so nicely together and I almost think she's beginning to like me a little, and then I do something—and truly, mamma, I don't mean it for harm, but it makes her so mad, and then she flares out at me and—and—I wouldn't mind her flaring out if she didn't think wrong things of me; that's what hurts! that she doesn't understand.”

“Poor little Dorothy,” sighed her mother, sadly, “that is just it; she doesn't understand so many, many things, and she makes it difficult for others to understand her. But I think that ‘way deep down,’ as she says, she is true and brave. It is only her naughty temper that sometimes gets the better of her. If I thought that at heart she were cruel and hard and cowardly I think I should despair.”

“Oh, she isn't! she isn't!” protested Helen, forgetting everything in her eagerness to champion the girl who had saved her life. “You'd never think she was cowardly if you'd seen what she did this afternoon.” And then the whole story came out, Mrs. Everest meanwhile shuddering at the danger they had escaped and smiling happily at poor, freakish Dorothy's valor.

"She has a strange nature—a strange nature," she murmured at last, and the conviction deepened when she heard the girl's door open and her voice shout over the balusters:

"You've gone and tattled after all, Helen Everest! Just you wait! I'll pay you up for this!"

## CHAPTER XI

### DOROTHY'S CHAMPION

DOROTHY remained closeted in her room until dinner time, and when she came down the storm-cloud had blown over. The truth was, the affair in the lane had shaken her even more than she herself realized and she was tired and upset by the heat and excitement. A nap set her all right again, and she quite forgot her sudden tantrum and threats of vengeance, and if she did not treat Helen with more consideration than usual she certainly did not treat her with less.

Poor Helen was always glad to take her as she found her, in the hope that some day she would "stay nice," and this evening she was as ready as usual to forget and forgive.

After dinner they all sat upon the veranda, and when the stars began to peer down at them from the tender evening sky, Dorothy got her banjo and, leaning back on her rattan couch,



"plunked" away contentedly. At first she would do no more than gently thrum upon the strings, but by and by as the twilight deepened and the darkness crept in between her and others, she forgot she was not alone and began to sing the dear old darkey melodies that the girls had so dearly loved at school. She sang them well, for she was, by nature, a mimic and had easily caught the soft negro drawl, while her voice, untrained though it was, was of so unusually sweet a quality that it made whatever she sang a pleasure to listen to. At first she only crooned some of the more familiar of the old plantation ditties, but gradually she let her voice out and then Colonel Everest was amazed at its loveliness and the taste with which she used it. He had never heard some of the newer songs she sang, and as she gave them they seemed to him absolutely charming. But when, at last, she broke off into a lullaby—a strange, drowsy, tuneless little thing—he almost applauded aloud with pleasure and was only restrained by his wife's hand, which she laid warningly upon his own.

"Don't!" it said as plainly as words, and he obeyed the silent command.

It was an old creole song that a girl from New Orleans had taught her at the Seminary, and instinctively Dorothy had caught all its quaint and wistful charm—a charm the New Orleans girl herself had never known it possessed. As she sang it now, a lump rose in the Colonel's throat and Helen sniffed aloud. But Dorothy was happily unconscious of them all and turned from the lullaby to a jolly "coon" song that set their toes to tapping the floor, with as much indifference as though the one were as good as the other.

When at length she laid her banjo across her lap with a sigh of satisfaction and threw herself back against the cushions of the couch to rest, her stepfather gave her a joyful shock by saying:

"I think, mamma, this young woman will have to have singing lessons in the autumn. When one has such a sweet voice in the family it is the least one can do to have it cultivated."

Mrs. Everest did not reply. Perhaps she was waiting in the hope that Dorothy herself would meet the kind offer with a burst of gratitude, or, at the least, a word of appreciation. But she did neither and her mother had to turn

to her with a gentle "What do you say to that, Dorothy?" before the girl acknowledged it at all.

"I—I should like to know how to sing," she said slowly, considering each word before she uttered it, "but I guess I don't care about having a teacher."

"Why, Dorothy!" protested her mother. "Only the other day you were saying how dearly you'd love to be taught. Don't you remember, dear? You said if you went back to the Seminary you'd like to have lessons from Mr. Max. Surely you haven't changed your mind?"

The girl picked at her banjo-strings absently and said nothing, while her mother waited for her to reply. At last she blurted out petulantly:

"No, I haven't changed my mind—but—but you said you—couldn't afford it, and so that's the end of that."

The Colonel threw back his head and laughed. "Good!" he exclaimed heartily. "I like that! It's great! Agnes, my dear, your scruples are the most delightful things in the world. I never knew a woman who held so conscientiously to

the mine-and-thine theory—no, practice. Only in your case it's 'all I have is my husband's' and nothing he has is—Dorothy's."

His wife gave a little exclamation of dismay. "Robert!" she cried protestingly, but the Colonel was too much of a man to consider whether his words were discreet or not. If a matter were to be discussed, he didn't see why one time wasn't as good as another.

"Now in the future, Dorothy," he continued, "you'd better let me decide what mamma can afford for you. I'm afraid she's not to be trusted. She's too much like 'Little Mabel'; she has a 'frugal mind.'"

Dorothy knew at once that all this was banter, but she chose to take it seriously.

"Thank you," she said sedately, "but I think my mother is perfectly right, and if she says she can't afford to let me have a thing, I'm willing to go without it. Besides, she never lets me take money or—things from—strangers."

For a moment there was a deep silence. Then Colonel Everest gave a long, low whistle, a sign that he was afraid of losing his temper. If Dorothy had understood it, she would have known how narrowly she was escaping a course

of severe discipline then and there. An army officer is not usually a man to be trifled with, and her stepfather was no exception to the rule. He was feared as well as loved by his men. But he thought of his wife, and gave the wayward girl another chance.

Poor little ignorant Dorothy! She did not know how many "chances" he had already given her, and how close she was drawing to the end of the sum.

She was satisfied, on the whole, that she had said something exceedingly cutting and severe, while at the same time she had shown him that she was willing to go without rather than be beholden to him for things as long as—as long as what? She did not bother to settle the problem, but, gathering up her banjo, bent over her mother for her good-night kiss.

Mrs. Everest gave it, but Dorothy felt in a moment that it was not the customary full-hearted kiss her mother loved to give and she to receive. She had sense enough to know that it would be reckless to ask any questions just now. She straightened herself up and went silently to the door. At the threshold she stopped, lingered a moment, and then turned;



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almost as if she were being drawn about against her will.

"Good-night!" she said.

"Good-night!" returned the Colonel and Helen.

Still she hesitated.

"And—and—thank you for speaking about—the—singing teacher," she gasped.

Then she scurried off into the house, and the next moment they heard her whistling in her own room up-stairs.

"I've heard that people sometimes whistle when they are afraid," observed the Colonel. "Is this an example, I wonder?"

His wife laughed.

"We had that a few moments ago. Some people whistle when they're afraid and others when they're ashamed. This is an example of that."

"Oh!"

They both laughed, while Helen wondered where the joke came in.

She and Dorothy got themselves ready for Elizabeth's luncheon on the following Monday with rather more than their usual care. In spite of what their mother had said, they wished



to look especially nice when they met Eleanor Olney. They told themselves it was because they wanted her to understand that they considered themselves quite as good as she.

Dorothy was wearing the despised organdie which, after all, she had not outgrown so completely as she had supposed. She looked with longing at the dainty dress which had been sent her from Paris—her very, very best—but of course she knew it was too elegant for a midday luncheon; for anything, in fact, but the stateliest of state occasions, and so she contented herself with her “second-best” and tried not to see the difference between it and Helen’s beautiful embroidered grass-cloth.

If Dorothy had been of a covetous nature she could easily have made the contrast between Helen’s wardrobe and her own a cause of enmity between her and her stepsister, for though the elder girl’s dresses were all made in the simplest fashion, after the foreign custom, they were of the finest materials, and had a style and cut that Dorothy could not help seeing her own home-made garments lacked. Even Helen’s underclothes were more delicate

than any she had ever seen, and their tiny tucks, dainty lace edgings and knots of baby-ribbon delighted her beauty-loving soul. To-day Helen wore a taffeta slip beneath her dress, and it rustled deliciously when she walked, while Dorothy, at best, could not make her starched cambric underskirt do more than faintly crackle.

But while she was jealous of the love of those she loved she was not covetous, and when she and her stepsister walked up the pathway leading to the Barclays' house they were on the friendliest terms they had ever reached.

Elizabeth came half-way down the veranda steps to meet them.

"Oh, heyo," she said. "Aren't you most dead, walking way over here in the sun? Why didn't you ride? I should think you would have. It's awfully hot in the middle of the day now. We get all the glare from the river and—oh!—let me introduce you to my friend, Miss Olney. Miss Olney, Miss Everest, Miss Day."

As Elizabeth turned to mount the last step with them a young girl rose from one of the veranda chairs, but she did not come forward to greet the newcomers and only acknowledged the

introductions with a slight inclination of the head.

Dorothy looked directly at her and knew in a moment that she was about Helen's height and age, but neither so graceful nor so sweet-faced as her stepsister. She had a certain something about her, though, that while it was neither beauty nor grace, gave the effect of both.

Her skin was dark and clear, her eyes large and very brilliant, and her black hair cast a sort of shadowy softness about her otherwise rather keen face. Beside her Helen looked like a shy country girl, and her frock as simple as a child's pinafore. Helen herself saw none of these things. She was so overawed that her spirit dwindled away to nothing, and she took the chair Elizabeth gave her with a murmured "thank you," and slipped into it somehow without having the courage to lift her eyes from the floor.

"Oh, by the way," said Elizabeth with a conscious laugh when they all were seated, "Miss Day tells me that you and she are cousins, Eleanor."

In an instant the hot blood had rushed into Dorothy's cheeks, and she cried out eagerly,

"Oh, no indeed! I didn't say we were. Only our mothers."

She wished that she could deny the relationship altogether.

Eleanor let her head fall a little to one side while her eyes traveled coldly over Dorothy's figure, taking it in from head to toe. Then she said slowly:

"Really, I'm sure I never heard of it. Perhaps Miss Day is mistaken in the family. There are other Olneys in New York, I believe. But they are not—er—not people we care to know. Perhaps they are the ones she means."

Dorothy was furiously angry; too angry in fact to be able to command her voice. She felt, for one short minute, as if she must choke with rage, and then all at once her brain grew quite clear and she found that it was the sound of Helen's voice that had made it so.

It was very low and even, as Helen's voice always was, but every word was distinct and clear, and while she spoke the girl gazed fearlessly across into Eleanor's eyes with new-found courage.

"My sister probably has made a mistake in the family," she said, smiling a little as she



"THE FAMILY IS A VERY OLD ONE"



cleared her throat. "Her connections are the Churchill-Olneys. That is, they choose to call themselves so, though the Churchill part of it comes from Mrs. Olney's people and has nothing to do with her husband's family. Mamma and Mrs. Churchill-Olney are first cousins. They were both Churchills before they were married. The family is a very old one; they've traced it clear back to the Crusaders, and though mamma doesn't think it makes any difference whether a person's family is old or not, so long as the person herself is nice and good, she is glad that one of her ancestors was brave enough to fight for the rights of the poor people who were being made to be vassals to certain men who thought they could be as cruel and domineering as they liked, just because they had lots of money and power and everything. Mamma thinks we ought to look out or else we'll have something like a feudal system here, and that would be dreadful, when our grandfathers fought so hard to make this a free country, and we're really only what we make ourselves, and one oughtn't to respect a person for his money, unless he's earned it himself honestly, and—and—that!"

Dorothy's eyes were fairly starting out of her head with amazement, and she could hardly believe her ears. Was this really Helen? Shy, shrinking Helen who had taken up the cudgels in her defense? She gazed at her in bewilderment, and it was her strained stare more than anything else that made her stepsister conscious of herself again and set her blushing and stammering. Her fingers began to pick at the ribbons at her belt, and she fixed her eyes in her lap with a startled quiver.

"Why—our name is Churchill-Olney," said Eleanor to Dorothy, with a decided toss of the head. "And if your mother was really a Churchill, I suppose she and mamma may be connected in some way—but all I can say is, I never heard of it, that's all. It's strange, too, that I shouldn't have known of you."

But by this time Dorothy's self-control had returned.

"Oh, not at all," she replied, easily. "Our mothers were never intimate. I only remember you because one day, when I was the littlest bit of a tot, and mamma and I were living at Grandpa Churchill's—it must have been right after my father died—you came there one day



with your mother, and they told me I must be very kind and polite to you and let you have all my play-toys because you were 'company.' I remember mamma told me I must always be generous to 'company.' She said real ladies always tried to make their company feel happy, and that was the first lesson I learned in politeness, and I remember you because you were the first one for whom I learned it."

Eleanor's dark face flushed angrily, and she was about to open her lips to speak, when a white-capped maid appeared at the house-door and announced luncheon.

It did not promise to be a very pleasant meal, for the guest of honor was decidedly cross, and the rest were, to say the least, constrained and uncomfortable. But Mrs. Barclay soon put them more at their ease, and Elizabeth appeared, in some strange way, to have undergone a change. She seemed bent on making them feel at home, and on good terms with one another, and soon they were chatting as amiably as if there were no such things in the world as sour looks and bitter words.

## CHAPTER XII

### A SURPRISE

EVEN Eleanor deigned to take part in the conversation at last, but she addressed all her remarks to Helen when she was not talking to her hostesses.

"Elizabeth tells me you've just come home from Europe," was her first observation.

"Yes," returned Helen.

"Are you glad to get back?"

"Yes; very glad indeed."

"How long were you away?"

"A long, long time; ever since I was quite a little thing. I was at a school in Boulogne, Madame Clary's."

"Fancy! Did you like it? Weren't you homesick? Where were your people? Were the girls nice?"

"I was frightfully homesick at first, but by-and-by I got used to it, and Madame Clary was always very good to me. I don't care much for

French girls, though some of them are rather nice, but there were plenty of English and Scotch girls at the Rue Basse. My father took me over and settled me there, and he came to see me whenever he was on furlough, but he couldn't very well bring me back, because he had to be on the frontier most of the time—he's in the service, you know—and we had no home East then. My mother was dead."

Eleanor lifted her eyebrows.

"But you spoke of your mother a little while ago," she prompted.

"Oh, yes. Didn't you know? Dorothy's mother is mine now," rejoined Helen, simply.

"How stupid of me! I ought to have remembered. I am sure Elizabeth must have mentioned it—but I'd forgotten."

Helen knew this was a fib and she felt her cheeks tingle for shame of it, but Eleanor went on as calmly as if she were the soul of truth.

"Do you like her?"

Helen's face flushed a deeper red, and she drew herself up proudly. "Like her? Like my mother!" she repeated indignantly.

"Stepmother," corrected Eleanor, with quiet insolence.

Helen turned her face away to hide the signs of the struggle she was having with her resentment before replying: "We never make that difference at home. Mamma is the dearest mother in the world, and I've never been as happy in my life as since I was with her."

"Oh, how nice! So different from one's idea of stepmothers. They are generally perfect tyrants. I suppose you speak French?"

"Yes," replied Helen, but her tone sounded hesitating and Eleanor, giving a short cough and lifting her eyebrows, began to gabble at her in that language, her tongue tripping and stumbling over the pronunciation, but rattling on regardless of rules, accents, or anything else.

Helen had all she could do to keep back a laugh as she listened to the strange jumble, and struggled to make enough sense of it to reply. But she managed to catch sufficient meaning in the crazy sentences to respond to her promptly when Eleanor, breathless but triumphant, concluded her harangue with a patronizing "*Comprenez-vous ce que je dis?*"

It was interesting to watch the change that came over her face and manner when Helen assured her that she did, and when Mrs. Bar-

clay, who listened to the further conversation between them, complimented Helen elaborately on her fluency and her "perfect accent."

Dorothy could have clapped her hands with gratification, and she could not help admiring Helen's gentle simplicity in acknowledging the compliments and her modesty in dropping back into her native tongue again as soon as she could politely do so.

Elizabeth bent toward Dorothy and whispered: "I do like Helen so much. She doesn't put on airs a bit; she isn't a particle stuck up, and she isn't always trying to show off, either."

Dorothy nodded and felt a strange sort of personal pride in the praise given her stepsister that set her to wondering at herself, and made her feel at peace with all men. She had sharp ears, and in spite of Elizabeth's chatter and Mrs. Barclay's occasional polite observations, she had overheard what Helen and Eleanor had been saying, and Helen's words about her mother had made her glow with a quick gratitude. But she kept her feelings to herself, and the luncheon passed without any further attempt on Eleanor's part to display her advantages. In fact, she seemed to have taken a fancy

to Helen, and when they rose from the table, walked beside her to the veranda, and arranged things so that she and Helen sat upon the cushioned couch together, while Dorothy and Elizabeth were left to take what chairs they chose and make the best of it. Eleanor's conversation bored Helen, and she would much rather have joined the others, for Dorothy was in one of her merry moods, and she knew very well that fun was to be had when this was the case. Elizabeth's jolly giggle proved her to be right, and it was all she could do to sit still and listen in patience to Eleanor's foolish chatter about fashions and style and the "lovely time" she had been having before she came here.

"Mamma gave the most stunning Fourth-of-July party! You can't imagine! It was perfectly fine! We danced until—oh! all hours, and I wore a perfect dream of a dress! It was the darlingest thing! And it cost—well, I'd be ashamed to tell you how much that dress cost. Well, I led the cotillion with Gerald Porter, and toward the last we got—sort of romping a little, and will you believe it—it was screamingly funny!—the lace on my skirt got caught on something and simply tore itself into

shreds. Mamma was furious. She laid me out cold after every one was gone, though, of course, at the time she laughed, and said it didn't matter a bit. Your dress wasn't made here, was it? I s'pose you brought it from Paris with you. I noticed it the first thing. Is this the original model, or did you have it copied?"

Helen looked up as if she had been suddenly waked from a dream. "No—yes—" she stammered confusedly. "I don't care—I mean, I don't know."

"I was asking about your frock."

"Oh, yes; I remember. Really I forget. Mamma buys all our things, mine and Dorothy's. You can't get anything much in Boulogne, so I s'pose it came from Paris. But I don't recollect. I'm sorry, if you'd really like to know. Perhaps mamma may remember. Sha'n't we go over to Elizabeth and Dorothy? They're having lots of fun. Just hear them laugh."

They were, in fact, laughing so heartily that presently Mrs. Barclay came to the door to see what was the trouble and declared that she had really thought, from the shrieks, that some one was in pain. At this there was another outburst, and just then the carriage came round and all

four of the girls scrambled in and were taken for a drive. Even Eleanor seemed to lose some of her "uppishness," and grew friendly and cordial under the influence of Helen's simple kindliness and Dorothy's blithe humor, and they fell to discussing plans for good times to come during her visit, which, it seemed, was to last until the middle of August.

"Let's see," said Dorothy, gayly, "that's two weeks from now. To-day's the third. My! how time has gone. It's just skedaddled—I mean flown."

"Don't you grudge every day of it—I mean vacation?" demanded Elizabeth. "I simply abominate school."

"So do I," chimed in Eleanor, and Helen admitted that she wasn't very fond of it, though it had been "sort of nice at Madame Clary's."

"Well, the Seminary's just fun," announced Dorothy. "We have the jolliest times in the world there. The girls in our set are, most of them, real dears, and there's one who's the best of all. She and I are great chums. I was invited to spend August at her house in Newport, and I would have gone only—only—"

"Only what?" prompted Eleanor.



Dorothy glanced up, first at her and then at her stepsister, whose cheeks had flushed and whose eyes looked suddenly anxious. She knew what Helen was dreading and all in a flash she remembered the plucky stand the timid girl had taken for her, and her loyalty to their mother, and made up her mind that she would not be outdone in generosity. She still felt sore and aggrieved about the Newport visit. She thought that her stepfather had been "real mean" about it, and the temptation to "pay him up" by letting the world know that she did not even care enough for him to call him "father" was never stronger than at this moment. But she thought of Helen and crushed down her impulse.

"Only what?" repeated Eleanor, impatiently.

"Only my father thought I had better not," she rejoined, quietly.

Eleanor and Elizabeth gave shrill little shrieks of pretended indignation, but Helen heaved a great sigh of relief and her eyes cleared suddenly.

"Better not go to Newport when you've got an invitation? How perfectly mean of him! Doesn't it make you furious?"

Dorothy tried her best to look as if it didn't, as she responded calmly: "Of course I'd have liked to go and visit my chum, but as long as I couldn't—I couldn't, and that's all there is about it."

"Well, I must say," broke in Eleanor with a dash of scorn in her voice, "you take it like a lamb—a woolly lamb. But you and your—sister seem to be perfect cherubs anyway. Now I don't pretend to be anything but a regular pickle, and if he were my father and kept me away from anywhere I wanted to go I—I—well, I guess I'd show him what I thought about it."

Dorothy laughed; a real hearty, genuine laugh. The idea of her being a cherub tickled her fancy, and she chuckled over it with relish. She wondered what her stepfather would say to the news and how Eleanor would behave if she saw Colonel Everest and realized the sort of man she was threatening to defy. "As if he'd care what she thought about it," mused Dorothy, recalling his great, soldierly figure and fine, determined face, and realizing how much strength of mind—she did not call it obduracy—it took to resist him.

But Eleanor did not follow up the subject; she never followed up any subject, and soon the conversation had drifted around to the "fun" she and Elizabeth expected to have during the coming fortnight.

"To-morrow we are going to golf in the morning, and in the afternoon there's Mrs. Thorpe's garden party. Then on Wednesday Miss Haviland is going to be married, and we're going to that. It's in St. Andrews's, and Mrs. Haviland told mamma the decorations were going to be 'superb.' They have a special train for guests, and the breakfast is coming from New York. It will be lovely fun. Eight bridesmaids and all. Then Thursday—I've forgotten what we have on for Thursday—oh, yes, we're going down the river, and on Friday there's Mrs. Lee's straw-ride. I wish Eleanor was going to be here in September, for then's the tournament. We have 'em every year and they're perfectly fine. This time it's going to be at the Beeches', and when the Beeches take up anything, it's done in style."

Dorothy told herself that she would have bitten her tongue out rather than have asked Elizabeth what a tournament was, but Helen

did it as naturally and simply as if she had been saying "How d'you do?"

"A tournament? Why, what's that?"

"Oh!" stammered Elizabeth, "you know the kind I mean; it—it's—why a tournament's—well, all the men around here who belong to the polo club get together every year and try to see which is the best rider. They have a mile track and every once in a while there's a pole with a cross-beam, and on the end there are rings—you know, like they have on the merry-go-rounds, and those places. Only here the horses are real, of course, and it's about a hundred times as hard to spear the rings. The one who gets the most rings in the least time gets the cup. It's lovely fun. Every one comes and it's awfully gay, for you see all the people you ever knew, and there are pages all dressed up to gather the rings that fall—they are the boys about here who ride well—and we all wear the best we've got, and afterwards there's a spread, and oh! it's the loveliest fun!"

"I wonder if papa will be in it," ventured Helen.

"Well, I rather guess so," declared Dorothy, fired with the idea. "I just guess they'd better

look out when he begins to ride. He'll get the cup and the saucer, too, if they aren't careful."

Elizabeth bristled. "I'd like to know why. Perhaps you don't know that my brother, Mortimer, is one of the crack polo players in this country, and Mr. Beech is another, and if you're going to play polo you've got to be simply a splendid horseman."

"Well, my father," broke in Helen, "is a cavalry officer, and they have to be pretty good horsemen, too. He can do all sorts of things on horseback. He's told me all about how they teach the men, when they first enter the service, at Fort Riley and places. They have what the older officers call 'monkey drill,' and I tell you, it's just exciting. They have to mount when the horse is going, and they have to do all sorts of difficult things, just as they do in the circus. 'Firebrand' is a real fierce horse, but my father can do anything he likes with him. No one else dares mount him but my father. And he makes him behave when he is in the saddle."

The girls looked impressed, and for the first time Dorothy felt a certain pride in her step-

father. Deeds of daring and bravery always appealed to her, and she knew him well enough to be sure that if he had told Helen all this it was because he considered it of no importance whatever. He never made much of anything he did or was, and up to this time Dorothy had never realized that he was anything more than an "interloper."

"Mamma told me he's out where the Indians are," remarked Elizabeth, with a shudder. "I should think he'd be scared to death. The very name of Indian makes me turn creepy."

"Oh, pooh! The Indians are peaceful enough now. All the fight has been taken out of them long ago," declared Eleanor, loftily. "I guess there hasn't been much of any trouble with them for years and years. I heard Mrs. Custer lecture last winter, and she's just lovely. She makes it all seem so real—she's the wife of the General, you know. Why, after I heard her I used to look in the papers every morning to see if there weren't any massacres or things—they're so exciting to hear about. But there wasn't—not an earthly one. I guess they're over for good now. The Indians know better."

Helen's face had grown very pale while

Eleanor was speaking, and Dorothy, who had faced round quickly at the first suggestion of "Indian" saw her chin tremble as she said unsteadily: "Oh, you're mistaken. One can never count on them, my father says. He isn't at all sure that they aren't planning an outbreak now. They've been restless for some time, and I heard mamma tell Mrs. Beech that she was very anxious. You know papa is only on furlough; if anything should happen he could be recalled, and he'd have to go right into the worst of it."

Dorothy felt her throat tighten, and she gave herself a petulant shake. "Oh, let's talk of something pleasanter. As Elizabeth says, 'the name of Indian makes me turn creepy.'"

"I think we ought to go home," said Helen, with a sudden start, as if she had forgotten something.

"It isn't late. I heard the four-twenty express whistle about ten minutes ago," responded Elizabeth.

"Oh, did you? Then we must go right away," insisted Helen, nervously.

"Why?" demanded Dorothy.

"Oh, because we—we—there! aren't those

our horses coming round the bend from the station, Dorothy?"

"Yes, and mamma's in the surrey—"

"Papa's in front!"

"And who's that in the seat beside mamma? It looks like—it looks like—it is—Marie!"



## CHAPTER XIII

### AN EXCITING RIDE

IN her excitement Dorothy almost pitched headlong out of the trap, and her mother laughingly shook her head at her and signified in pantomime that if she did not sit down Marie should be taken directly back to the station.

"Marie? Who's Marie, anyway?" demanded Eleanor, curiously.

"Oh, my chum; the one I was telling you about," replied Dorothy, feverishly, bobbing her head ecstatically at the other carriage, from which Marie bobbed ecstatically back again.

The Barclays' coachman reined in his horses, and as soon as the surrey overtook them such a clatter of tongues as arose.

"Oh, Marie, you old duck, hello!"

"Hello, Dorry! Isn't this just jolly!"

"Did you come on this train? Have you just got here?"

"Yes; I've been on the cars since morning."

"Did you come all alone?"

"No indeed. Some friends of mamma's brought me down from Boston, and your father met me in New York and brought me up here."

"Why—why," stammered Dorothy, giving her stepfather a sidelong glance. "Why, did he know you were coming?"

Marie laughed. "Well, I should think so. It was he who arranged it all. Don't you remember commencement night at the Seminary? He and mamma planned it out between them, didn't you, Colonel Everest?"

The Colonel nodded and Dorothy said "Oh!"

She was reminded by her mother that she had not introduced her guest to her other friends, and she hurried to repair the oversight.

"Miss Olney, this is my friend, Marie Pollock. Marie, this is Elizabeth Barclay, and oh! Helen Everest—you've heard me speak of them." It was not an elegant introduction, but it put the girls at their ease at once and they fell into a friendly chatter without delay.

In the midst of it Eleanor said, hesitatingly: "You haven't presented me to your mother, Miss—Miss—oh, Dorothy. I wish you would."

Dorothy gave a quick look at her. "Why, certainly," she said; "to tell you the truth I'd forgotten all about it. I am a regular blunderhead. Mamma, this is Elizabeth's friend, Miss Olney, from New York."

Mrs. Everest bent her head kindly, and was just about to say something cordial when Eleanor blurted out awkwardly:

"I—I remember you perfectly now—Cousin Agnes. You look just the same as you did years and years ago when—when you were so kind to me. Don't you remember—how you nursed me once when I was sick? I had scarlet fever and mamma got so nervous she had to go away, and you stayed and—and—gave me my medicine and took care of me until I was well. I've never forgotten it—and sometimes now I wish—I wish I had some one to tell me stories as you did then. You used to kiss me good-night every evening and say, 'God bless you!'"

Mrs. Everest's face had grown wonderfully tender while Eleanor recalled those long-ago days, and when she paused she returned her wistful look with another that was very gentle.

"Yes, I remember you very well, dear," she

answered. "You have grown and changed, but I think I can still see something of the little Nellie I used to love."

The girl's sharp eyes softened.

"There!" she cried, with a sort of triumph. "You called me Nellie. No one ever called me that except you. It all comes back to me now, and—and—I'm so glad."

The rest of the girls were speechless with astonishment, and did not at all take in the whole significance of the situation. But Mrs. Everest saw in a flash that here was a poor heart-starved, neglected girl, whose life had been so empty of real affection that she remembered with gratitude the simple loving words and acts that to her own sheltered "baby" seemed merely matters of course. To feed her thirsty little life she had turned to the world as she knew it, and it had given her the only things it had to offer: pride of birth and wealth and position. No wonder the poor child saw everything in a warped and uncertain light.

"You and Elizabeth must come to Adelhurst as often as you can," said the gentle mother, "for if three girls can have a better time than

two, I'm sure five would be able to make the time a best one. Don't you think so?"

Dorothy was not at all sure that she cared to have the couple from the other house intrude upon her and Marie, but she had to swallow her discontent and resign herself, for she knew that her mother would not see Eleanor or Elizabeth slighted in any way.

She was glad when they reached home, and she could have Marie all to herself in the cozy room next her own which had been assigned to her.

"How long are you going to stay?" was her first question, which did not sound polite, but was meant to be thoroughly friendly.

"Through August."

"Oh, goody!"

"Colonel Everest said if I was homesick he'd take me back at any time. But I don't intend to be homesick."

"Why, I should think not! And oh! what good times we'll have. We'll go out boating, and you'll die laughing at Helen's pony; but, of course, she'll want you to go out driving with her. And there are ever so many other things to do."

"Don't you think it would be nice to have your sister in here now? She kind of looked as if she'd like to come, and if she doesn't mind seeing me dress I don't mind having her. You and I are old friends, and if we shut ourselves up together she'll feel left out in the cold," suggested Marie.

A quick dart of jealousy went through Dorothy like a flash, and she opened the door with a sort of fling, and called, not any too cordially:

"Oh—Helen! You can come in if you want to."

Helen was sitting in her own room looking solitary and lonely, but she glanced up pleasantly and replied:

"Perhaps I will—later, thank you. But not just now."

"Oh, do!" cried Marie over Dorothy's shoulder. "That is, unless you're busy or mind seeing me in 'dishy-billy,' as Fanny Bergen says."

The invitation was too heartily spoken to be resisted, and Helen sprang to her feet with a happy smile and came hurrying in to join the other two behind that fascinating closed door.

She had thought that when Marie came she would be shoved aside and neglected, and here she was being made to feel as if she were really one of them, for even Dorothy had conquered her first spasm of jealousy and was including her as a matter of course in all their plans and arrangements for future fun. It gave her a thrill of sudden happiness, and she felt that the world was a very blissful place after all and not the lonely one she had thought it a little while ago.

At the dinner table Colonel Everest asked Marie how she amused herself at home.

"We can't give you surf-bathing," he said, "but perhaps we may be able to think up some other sport that will take its place. Our girls here are not very venturesome. I don't think they've used the boat once since we came home; and as for horses—well, the little mouse Helen drives is the only one I ever see them behind. Perhaps you are not so timorous. Are you fond of horses?"

Marie's eyes brightened eagerly. "Oh, yes, indeed. Very."

"Ride?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Then we must have some gallops together. My wife has never had the courage to sit in a saddle. Helen can't ride and Dorothy—doesn't. So I'm the 'solitary horseman' in this establishment."

"Why, doesn't Dorothy ride yet?" asked Marie, in astonishment. "I thought by this time she'd surely have learned and be 'way ahead of me. She always masters things so quickly when she wants to and does them so much better than the rest of us—and she was perfectly wild to ride horseback."

Colonel Everest looked up surprised. "Eh? What is that? Dorothy 'wild' to ride horseback? I never heard of it. How's that?"

Dorothy, being so directly addressed, blushed scarlet, and for once in her life was at a loss for words.

But Marie took up the subject where she had left off, and covered the embarrassment of the situation with a full explanation of how she and Dorothy had arranged it all—even to the habit which Marie had meant to supply, having outgrown one while it was yet new and being pretty sure it would fit Dorothy, who was smaller than herself by half a head.



Colonel Everest seemed greatly pleased and before the meal was over he had given Dorothy an approving smile, and said he was glad to find he had at least one girl in the family who was worth something.

"The other two, mamma and Helen, are just clinging vines and it never occurred to me that Dorothy might be anything different in this respect. But since she has so much pluck, why, we must see that she has an opportunity to exhibit it. I'll teach you to ride myself, Dorothy, and if I find that you really mean business, we'll set about getting you something better than white Kitty out in the stable who, while she's a dear old nag, is just a little too easy-going to suit my taste. There's a pretty little chestnut at Mr. Beech's that I have been looking at. I think I'll send John over there to-night and have her brought around. Then if she suits you—well, we'll see. That is," he added with a quizzical twinkle in his eyes, "if mamma will let you accept things from—strangers."

The mischievous shaft passed over the girl's head unnoticed, or, if she felt it, she bore the sting without wincing. Her joy was too complete for anything to disturb her now, and she

said, "Oh, thank you, ever so much!" with a whole heartful of gratitude in her voice.

After that Dorothy's riding lessons became a regular part of the day's program and she persevered manfully in spite of aching limbs and the knowledge that she looked like a "fright" in her makeshift habit, which consisted of an old broadcloth skirt of her mother's, her step-father's golf cap, her own shirt-waist, and a pair of riding-boots she had once worn in tableaux.

But little she cared how she looked. The delight of being on horseback drove all the rest out of her mind, and she could hardly keep from shouting when for the first time she and Marie and Colonel Everest set out for the open road and a "real ride."

Helen, looking wistful and pathetic, stood in the doorway waving them good-by, and Dorothy felt so sorry for her that she broke out with sudden vehemence:

"Oh, dear, I don't see why Helen doesn't ride, too. She might just as well be with us now as not. I don't think she ought to let herself be so afraid."

A troubled line appeared between her step-

father's brows, and he sighed in a way that even Dorothy saw was anxious.

"Poor little Helen," he said. "She has reason to be afraid. But even if she were courageous enough to try I could not let her ride."

Both girls dimly wondered why, but neither dared ask, for Colonel Everest looked so grave and his face, when he was grave, seemed so severe that they felt the best they could do was to walk the horses on and let a minute or two pass in silence. Then, all at once, they heard the sound of flying hoofs. Something flashed past them, and there was Firebrand galloping on ahead, while the Colonel shouted back at them: "Come on! Come on! Let's see which will beat! To the top of the hill!"

It was all Dorothy could do to keep her saddle, for though her stepfather jeered at her steed and called her "Kitty-pussy," she seemed a pretty fiery charger to the unaccustomed young horsewoman who, though she was still not afraid, was learning that full confidence is not to be had on horseback till one has really mastered the secret of it.

But though they did their best, and Marie on Mr. Beech's chestnut flew forward like an arrow

in Firebrand's wake, the Colonel was out of sight in a trice, and when they got to the goal he was placidly whistling, biting a bit of grass and looking as if he had been waiting for them for an hour.

"Why didn't you come?" he drawled out with an air of mock weariness, betraying himself with one of his mischievous twinkles. "Didn't you hear me say I was going ahead? If you hadn't come up just as you did I thought seriously of going back and hunting you up. I was beginning to get anxious."

Dorothy, breathless and panting, shot a saucy glance at him.

"Pooh! Who couldn't ride on a horse like Firebrand? His back is so broad one might as well think of falling off if one were sitting on the floor."

The Colonel pretended to look astonished.

"Falling off? Who was thinking of falling off? Not Dorothy on her 'Kitty-pussy,' surely."

"I think it's real mean," cried the girl, pretending, in her turn, to be injured, "to make fun of animals that can't answer back."

"Oho!" laughed her stepfather, "can't they, though! I guess you haven't made their

acquaintance yet, young lady. Better ask Mr. Kipling whether animals can answer back and see what he says. Ask the Indians. They'll tell you a thing or two. Why, an Indian pony doesn't need to be told—he feels what his master wants and he answers back in the best way in the world—by instant obedience. If horses don't retort in words when one gives them an order or criticises them, it's because they are too wise and too well trained. Horses are like soldiers, they know that when they are on duty they must not sulk or grumble—they must just take orders and—march!"

While he was talking the Colonel fixed his eyes on Dorothy with a look half whimsical, half earnest, but so entirely steady that it drew her own glance to meet it in spite of herself, and though she tried to appear first unconscious, and then defiant, and then contemptuous, all her efforts failed and she knew that she was merely looking submissive and intelligent.

After a second her stepfather let her eyes go by removing his own, which were dancing with fun by this time, and she knew that in that little tilt he had had decidedly the best of it, but that he did not mean to use his advantage.

He kept Firebrand abreast of the other two horses after this, and Dorothy felt that it must be a trial to him to have to suit his pace to theirs; but he did not seem to mind it, and as they trotted along the wide hill-top road he pointed out first this wild flower and then that, explaining to what family each belonged and occasionally slipping in a pretty legend connected with the supposed origin of some of the names. It was so interesting that the girls forgot to notice the sky which, all of a sudden, had grown black and threatening, and were surprised when Colonel Everest broke off in the middle of a sentence to say:

"Come! We must hurry. A storm is gathering. If we can get under shelter we'll be all right. I'll go on ahead and see what I can find. It will save time."

He led the way and the girls followed as quickly as their horses could gallop, but the storm outstripped them and they were still far off from any sign of shelter when the first flash of lightning cut vivid gashes in the granite sky and the thunder followed with an echoing crack which could not have been louder if the clouds had indeed been turned to stone and the light-

ning a hammer-stroke that had cleft them apart.

Marie gave a wild shriek and pelted on like a mad thing. In her panic she let her foot slip from the stirrup and every bound of the frightened mare threatened to throw her. She clung on with might and main, sobbing and crying from fright, and losing what little presence of mind she might have had in the first place, while the rain came flooding down upon them in streaming sheets and the lightning and thunder tore it apart from sky to ground as if it had been an unrolled piece of muslin.

"For mercy's sake," shouted Dorothy, bringing Kitty up beside her with a great effort, "don't cry so, Marie. We're all right. It'll be over in a minute."

A blinding flash and a deafening clap followed quick on her words and Mr. Beech's chestnut, thoroughly maddened with the hubbub and her crazy burden, set off on a wild run down the road, Dorothy in pursuit, and both girls drenched to the skin.

"She'll be off in another minute. She can't hang on like that a second longer. Her horse is running away. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

wailed Dorothy inwardly, not daring to moan aloud lest Kitty take fright and follow the chestnut's example, but so horrified at Marie's danger that each breath she drew was a pain.

The blur of the steaming rain closed round her like a fog and she could only see a little way ahead, but through all the clatter of the storm she could hear Marie's cries and the hammer of the horse's flying hoofs. She listened for the sound of something else—something that she felt must come: the sound of a body falling to the ground and perhaps being trampled on, and she thought that when it did come she would not care what harm she might suffer in the storm.

"Away from her mother—promised to take care of her. If she should be hurt—killed—how could we ever tell—?"

The thoughts came like broken, panting breaths and seemed to catch in her throat and choke her. And still she flew on, peering before her with straining eyes to see if she could make out anything ahead, for the noise of the storm had grown wilder, now that the whistle of the wind was added to the growl and crash of the thunder, and between them



both she had lost the sound of the chestnut's hoofs.

As she looked, a sudden lightning-flash made the world white for what seemed a long, long minute. In the ghostly glare everything stood out with terrible distinctness and she saw Marie's frenzied horse dashing madly ahead, the girl just hanging to the saddle, and that was all. At every bound the animal made, her heels flung out and back against its side again, and every time they did so the horse plunged and then flung forward once more too thoroughly crazed to see that it was making straight for a low hut which stood at an angle in the road where it branched off into a V. Unless it were instantly checked the chestnut would surely bolt into it. In that one white, ghastly minute Dorothy saw all this; saw that if the mare were not checked Marie's life would be lost, for the low, overhanging eaves were on a level with her head, and she longed to close her eyes and shut out the terrible sight. But she could not shut them; she could only gaze and gaze. Suddenly up one of the branches of the divided road came her stepfather. Dorothy's staring pupils burnt like living coals. She saw him

lean forward—Firebrand leaped ahead, stopped, wheeled, pounded toward the rearing chestnut and in a second Marie was snatched from her saddle, safe in the Colonel's arms.

Then another dash of rain came in between them and shut them out of sight, and Dorothy could only hear the jeer of the vicious wind and feel the smite of the stinging rain.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AT MRS. MALTBY'S

AN instant later she heard her name shouted in an anxious, strained voice, "Dorothy! Dorothy!"

"Here!" she shouted briefly back, as she and Kitty drove forward, heads down, against the breath-taking gusts.

She was nearer her stepfather than she had imagined, and presently they were both hurrying on abreast toward a light which shone cheerily out from the gray mist ahead. They made for it silently.

Marie was not crying now and Dorothy was glad, for she felt that now the worst was over, since the girl was safe and her hysterical sobbing had stopped. She dimly wondered where the chestnut was. She wondered whether they would ever get it back. But she had not much time for speculation, for at the Colonel's short "This way! Turn in here!" she guided Kitty

through a wide gateway and the next minute a door was flung open and a shaft of light struck through the fog. A man stood on the threshold with a lamp in his hand. He set it down on a table and came hurrying out.

"Can you take her," asked the Colonel, "till I dismount?"

"Certain, sir. Let her come. That's right! I have her now!"

The next instant the Colonel had vaulted off his horse and was carrying Marie into the house.

"Now, Miss," said the stranger to Dorothy, and she slipped out of the saddle and, with his help, safely to the ground.

Her muscles were stiff and sore and she had all she could do to hobble up the doorstep and into the plain, bare, living-room where her stepfather had borne Marie.

"I'll see to the horses, Miss," shouted the man. "You go in and make yourself comfort'ble. Pull the door sharp; it shuts hard."

"What's the matter with Marie?" she asked, as she did as she was bade, and for the first time realized that something was amiss.

"Nothing serious," replied the Colonel. "She

has fainted, but she'll come out of it all right. She's coming out of it now. There, there, don't fret, child," for at the word "faint" Dorothy had sprung with a cry to the couch where Marie lay and was staring down at her with agonized eyes and an expression that would have been tragic if it had not been ludicrous. She had never seen any one unconscious before, and a faint seemed to her something only a little less dreadful than death itself.

She was soaking wet and her dripping hair was hanging in lanky strands over her rain-beaten cheeks, while her shirt-waist clung to her skin as if it had been glued upon it. But she stood quite unconscious of her own plight, watching and waiting for Marie to "come out of it all right."

A moment or so more, and the girl began to breathe more deeply, then her eyelids lifted, and she gave a heavy sigh. Colonel Everest turned away.

"She'll be herself in a little while now. Get her things off as fast as you can, and, Dorothy, make her drink this as soon as she is able. I'll see that everything is right outside, and Mrs. —" he hesitated, and then, for the first time, Dorothy

realized that a kind-faced woman was standing in the doorway.

"Maltby, sir," prompted she, good-naturedly.

"Mrs. Maltby will help you and perhaps lend you a shawl or two to wrap about you while your clothes are drying. That's a good fire, and I don't see how you can take cold."

With that he turned and left the room, and Dorothy found herself alone with her hostess and Marie, who had opened her eyes and was looking about languidly.

"Hello!" said Dorothy.

"Hello!" returned Marie, faintly.

"How do you feel? All right? Here, drink this. He—he said I was to give it to you, so—down it goes."

Marie swallowed the liquid with an effort, and in a few minutes Dorothy, with Mrs. Maltby's help, had stripped off her sopping garments, and she was lying warmed and comforted between blankets, gazing lazily at her steaming habit and other belongings, which were dripping before the fire. After a second or two her eyes closed and she had dropped off into an easy sleep.

"Now, for goodness' sake, Miss," whispered

Mrs. Maltby to Dorothy, "get your own duds off. You'll catch your death if you don't. I never did see sech a pour, and from the looks of you you didn't miss a drop."

The girl laughed. "I don't mind rain when it comes down," she said whimsically, "but when it comes up it isn't pleasant. We caught it both ways: first straight, then on the rebound. It'll take our duds for ever and ever to dry."

The woman spread her drenched skirt over the back of a chair and set it, as she had done Marie's, to steam before the fire.

"I expect your ma'll be terrible worried about you," she said, cheerfully.

"Oh, I guess not," responded Dorothy, after considering a moment. "She'll think we've got under cover. She's got over fidgeting about me."

"Well, you do look like one that can take care of herself," observed Mrs. Maltby, regarding her with a smile as she squatted down upon a piece of rag-carpet on the floor, after having looked about for a chair and found them all in use.

"Oh, I oniy make the best of things," re-

turned she. "If I can't be comfortable I try to be as comfortable as I can."

Mrs. Maltby laughed.

"That's the way to do, and no mistake," she said, nodding. "It makes things much more agreeable all 'round. Any one that's always fault-finding and tetchy is awful irritatin' about a house. Just one person of that kind in a fam'ly is enough to set the whole place by the ears."

Dorothy sat and considered the subject in silence, and the longer she pondered the more she felt that what she had said about herself was not altogether true. She had by no means tried to be as comfortable as she could with her stepfather and Helen. She had gone out of her way to pick flaws in them and to take offense when none was intended. She repeated Mrs. Maltby's words to herself and felt that the cap fitted and that she must put it on:

"Any one that's fault-finding and tetchy is awful irritatin' about a house. Just one person of that kind in a fam'ly is enough to set the whole place by the ears."

For the first time it occurred to her that the Colonel and Helen might have their side of the



story, and that they might easily have found her both disagreeable and irritating. She had never thought of that before, and yet, now that she did think of it, she saw they had "a case," as the lawyers say, as well as herself. It was such a new view of the situation that she forgot everything else in thinking about it, and the time flew by unheeded while she still sat there with her chin in her palms and stared at the draught-holes in the stove.

Mrs. Maltby spoke to her in a whisper once or twice, but as she was too preoccupied to reply, presently stole out of the room and went about her business, so that when at last Dorothy came out of her brown study, she was alone in the unfamiliar room except for Marie, who was still asleep on the lounge in the corner.

She jumped to her feet and pattered over to the window. The rain was still falling in torrents, but the lightning and thunder had ceased long ago. She did not know how late it was; by the looks of the world outside it must be getting well along toward evening. She wondered how they should get home, and where Mr. Beech's chestnut was, and whether her mother really would be frightened. A sudden

wave of homesickness swept over her as she thought that she and Marie might be compelled to spend the night here in this strange house away from—"home." She made her way back to the fire, where the array of steaming garments hung in a shadowy circle round the glowing stove. Her cloth skirt was still heavy with moisture and Marie's was just as bad. There was no hope of their being fit to wear to-night. The lighter pieces were slowly drying, but even they would not be in a condition to put on for some time. Dorothy gave a great sigh of impatience and went over to Marie's side to see whether there were any chance of her waking. In doing so she ran against a wooden cricket and overturned it noisily. Marie opened her eyes and yawned.

"Oh, hello!" said Dorothy again. "Did I wake you?"

Marie started up. "Why, what is it? Where am I? How did we get here?"

Dorothy laughed. "We're trying to dry up after our shower-bath, and we're at Mrs. Maltby's—whoever she is."

By this time Marie was sitting bolt upright.

"Oh, Dorothy!" she groaned. "Now I remem-

ber. Wasn't it awful? And—and—I behaved like a perfect idiot, but I couldn't help it! Truly and honestly I couldn't. That lightning scared me most to death, and then the horse was running away—it was, as sure as anything. And I couldn't stop it. Every bit of strength went out of me and all I could do was scream and scream."

She was so terribly mortified that Dorothy delicately refrained from saying: "Yes—we heard you scream and scream."

"But I don't remember how we got here," went on Marie. "Was I thrown? I felt myself going and I couldn't cling on a minute longer. Did I really fall off? I don't feel any hurt anywhere."

Dorothy laughed. "Good reason why, ma'am. You haven't got any. No, you weren't thrown. You were most carefully lifted off."

"Lifted off!" echoed Marie, wonderingly. "Then I wasn't being run away with after all? Oh! I must have been even a worse goose than I thought. What can your father think of me? Where did the horse stop?"

"I'm sure I can't say," replied Dorothy. "For all I know it may be running yet. It

certainly didn't stop while we were in sight, and you needn't worry about not having been in danger. You were being run away with fast enough if that's all you want, and if it hadn't been for—if it hadn't been that you were grabbed off the saddle when you were—why, things would have been pretty serious."

"Was it your father who grabbed me?"

"Uh-huh! He came up on Firebrand, and I wish you could have seen how he did it. I declare it was beautiful—like clockwork. There you were, hanging as limp as a rag and your horse going like mad, straight for a shed where you'd have been dashed into smithereens. Well, he came up on Firebrand and it took just a second for him to see what was up. He put straight toward you and then stopped so short that Firebrand was right on his haunches; then he wheeled him around, and as your lovely chestnut came bolting up, he just leaned over toward you and gathered you out of the saddle and into his arms. But I tell you, if it hadn't happened precisely as it did there wouldn't have been any you to tell the tale to. So 'don't be sorrowful, darling.' At least, if you were a goose, you had something to be a goose over. Only if you

hadn't screamed in the first place I don't think the horse would have become unmanageable."

"Oh, I know it—I know it," wailed Marie. "But I was just scared crazy. What will your father think? What will he think?"

"Pooh, I guess he knows folks can't always have their wits about them," returned Dorothy, consolingly. "I guess he thinks it's lucky you're alive. I know I do. But I tell you what I wish: I wish we were safe and sound at home. I don't like it worth a cent being here in this strange place, an' maybe having to stay here all night."

"Oh, goodness!" cried Marie. "Do you s'pose we shall? Where's your father?"

"In the next room, I dare say, wringing out his crop-stick."

"Oh, Dorothy—don't joke. Can't you ask him if we really shall have to stay here all night?"

"It's raining pitchforks; we're miles and miles away from home, our clothes are sopping wet yet, and your fiery charger is probably getting dampened down in the next county. Anyway, he isn't here to carry you, even if you were ready to ride him. So there you are. I

don't think it's necessary to ask if we've got to stay. I guess it's just plain must, and make the best of it."

Marie groaned.

"It isn't what you might call festive," admitted Dorothy. "But we can't get out of it, and to-morrow it may be a dazzling morning, and then, perhaps, Mr. Maltby will let you ride home on one of his cows."

For a moment the girls looked at each other and then they both burst into a peal of laughter.

"Big Injun, eat much meat!" gasped Dorothy, pointing to Marie's blanket, in which she was swathed from head to foot.

"Don't say a word," panted Marie. "You needn't think you look a bit better."

"All you need is a little tasteful tattooing and you'd be the prize squaw of the tribe. What is it somebody says they do when they see an enemy? Oh, yes! hurl the deadly moccasin at him."

"I've nothing but a riding-boot, and that's wet."

"Never mind. We'll protect ourselves against the pale faces with that. Me noble chief shall

never say that Hia-ha-ha and Minnie-watha are not plucky squaws and worthy of their tribe. Lo! When to-night these enemies of ours lie asleep, then shall we slip from our wampums and take their scalps with our keen-edged papooses. See how the blade of mine gleams in the starlight !”

“For goodness’ sake do stop! They’ll hear you!” pleaded Marie, choking with laughter, as Dorothy strode to and fro in her trailing blanket, occasionally brandishing a riding-boot, and varying the performance with a wild leap into the air and a savagely whispered “Whoop!”

But by this time she was in full swing and not to be stopped. She went on and on, convulsing Marie with her absurdity and succeeding so well in diverting her thoughts from their uncomfortable predicament that she did not hear the sound of wheels coming to a halt just before the house, nor the murmur of voices in the entry-way outside.

Dorothy heard, but did not understand, and so, when the door opened and Mrs. Maltby and Hilda appeared on the threshold laden down with wraps and a fresh relay of clothing, the

girls both joined in a shrill shriek of surprised delight and fell on the astonished maid with cries of welcome which could not have been more vociferous if they themselves had been forlorn exiles and she the means of their deliverance.



## CHAPTER XV

### RAINY DAYS

It did not take them very long to slip into their dry clothes, but all the while they were dressing they plied Hilda with questions.

"Was Mrs. Everest scared?"

"Yes, miss, and Miss Helen, she was awful much scared, too."

"How did you know where we were?"

"Your papa he come home just one litt' while ago on his horseback and he mek John harness up right quick away, and when he should be ready I get into the carriage with your papa and the clothes which your mamma and me have packed up, and we come here so fast as we can."

It was the first the girls had known of Colonel Everest's share in their rescue.

Dorothy stopped short in the act of buttoning her shoe and exclaimed: "Did you ever? Why—ee, I thought as much as could be that he was in the next room all the time."

"So did I," returned Marie, and then, as Mrs. Maltby was out of ear-shot, she added: "If I'd known he wasn't I'd have been frightened to death. Just think of it! Our being all alone in a strange house—away from everything. Why, if they'd had the mind they might have murdered us!"

"For gracious' sake, Marie Pollock, do stop iffing! Do you s'pose he'd have left us here if he hadn't known the Maltby's were respectable in the first place? Is it very bad outside, Hilda?"

"The rain he just pour down like it was out of a ocean, miss. I think I never shall see such rain before."

"Oh, well, we'll be under cover going home, so I don't care now," asserted Dorothy. "But I tell you, Marie, I was beginning to feel funny when I thought we might have to stay all night. I think it was awfully good of him to take all that trouble for us, don't you?"

Marie grew suddenly very serious. "Well, to tell you the truth, Dorothy, I don't want to make you mad, but I think he's perfectly splendid. I know lots of magnificent things he's done out West, for when I was coming here

there was a friend of papa's staying at our house and he knew Colonel Everest and told us heaps about him. And now—just think what he did for me this afternoon! I guess when papa and mamma hear about it they won't know how to thank him. I'm sure I can't begin to say how I feel."

"Oh, that's nothing," observed Dorothy, with an air of proprietorship in her stepfather's courage, which was as much as to say, "Pooh! that's not anything to what he can do."

As soon as they were quite ready they made for the door, leaving Hilda to gather up the damp habits and other belongings and follow after with the load.

"Well, young women," was the Colonel's greeting. "Are you clothed and in your right minds now? Take it all in all you've had quite an adventure, haven't you?"

Not a word of reference did he make to Marie's particular share in it. She gave him a quick glance to see if she could make out any sign of annoyance or mischief in his face, but there was not a shadow of either, and she drew a long breath of relief as she realized that she was not to be moralized over, or, worse still,

made fun of. She knew that her lack of self-control might have brought about serious consequences, and she felt deeply mortified at her behaviour. She felt she could not endure being plagued about it. But since the Colonel was not going to "throw it up" to her, she bravely put her pride in her pocket, and going to him looked up in his face with a sort of misty smile and said:

"Colonel Everest, I want to tell you how sorry I am for all the trouble I gave you this afternoon. It was all my fault. I was awfully silly—and I could have helped it—I s'pose—if I had tried to very hard. But I was scared and I let myself go and—and—Dorothy told me what you did and—I never knew anything like it—and, oh, Colonel Everest—!"

The Colonel grasped the hand she held out to him and covered it with both his own. "Why, don't give the thing another thought," he said, kindly. "It isn't worth it. I'm glad you have come out of it so well. No one could have foreseen such a storm, but if any one was at fault it was I, for I should have remembered I wasn't commanding a company of toughened troopers, and have stayed behind and led your

horses myself. But I thought it better to go ahead and have a shelter ready for you when you came up. I was wrong, and you have my humblest apologies."

Dorothy, who had been in the habit of thinking an apology the most bemeaning of performances and one to be strictly avoided by proud-spirited people, felt her cheeks glow with appreciation of the dignified thing it could be made to prove when it was honestly offered. And yet here was her stepfather, according to accounts, a thoroughly gallant man, "degrading" himself by acknowledging himself at fault to a mere school-girl. She thought that if she had been in his place she would "rather have bitten her tongue out," and yet, as he had done it, it did not seem at all a thing to be ashamed of.

She shrugged her shoulders in bewilderment. Somehow, her world seemed turning topsyturvey and she appeared to herself to be becoming a smaller and more unimportant particle of it every day. She never used to have any doubts of herself at all, but of late she had begun to suspect that perhaps she might be mistaken in some things. And it was not that she was being abused and browbeaten into such

self-distrust. The worst of it was that the change was going on in her own mind, and that she could not put the blame of her uneasiness on any one else. And yet, in some ways, she was happier than she had ever been before—but, oh, dear! that was because she was with her mother, of course, and could have nothing to do with her growing to be less like the little water-wagtail that is supposed to sing:

“’Twas for my accommodation  
Nature rose when I was born.  
Should I die the whole creation  
Back to nothing would return.”

All the way home, while they were splashing through the flooded roads, she pondered over it, and her stepfather and Marie, thinking she was sleepy, did not disturb her. She cuddled against the cushions and gazed at the foggy window through which she could see nothing but the blotches of rain that beat upon its pane and shone black as ink against the faint light cast by the carriage-lamps.

But when they reached home she shook herself into a gayer humor and was the first to leap out of the brougham and into the arms her mother held out to her.

There could not have been a heartier welcome than that which they received—not if they had been Arctic explorers straight from the North, after years of absence and all sorts of privations and dangers.

Helen waited on them hand and foot, helped them out of their wraps and into their places at the dinner-table and coddled them so generally that at last Dorothy went off into a spasm of laughter and cried:

“There! I never knew what it meant to be a lion before, but I do now, and it’s just perfectly fine. Keep it up, Helen, keep it up. Only when you wake in the night, famished and crying for a crust, don’t expect Marie or me to hear you. We’ll be sleeping the sleep of the just—fed, and you won’t get a bit of credit for having had everything passed to us and not eating a morsel yourself. Not that we don’t deserve to be feasted. Oh, I tell you, you ought to love us for the dangers we have passed—but we’ll give you time to eat a decent meal, if you’ll promise to go on kotowing right after.”

It was a short evening, for they dined late and Mrs. Everest insisted on their getting to bed early, but they occupied their time mainly in

telling over their experiences and planning for the next day's amusement.

But, alas! when the next day arrived it proved to be a continuation of rain and wind, and all the beautiful schemes for out-door fun had to be abandoned. They bore the disappointment cheerfully and set about finding employment in the house, which was the easier to do as there were three of them together, and what one did not think of the others were sure to suggest.

Marie brought out her paint-box, and for a time they interested themselves with their brushes and water-colors. Then, when backs were cramped and eyes tired, they varied the program with a game of pillow-dex, but Helen soon had to drop out and the other two silently voted to do something that she could join in, though, to be perfectly honest, Dorothy had not much patience with her, and insisted that if she exercised a little more she would be the better for it. So they made "fudge" and read aloud to one another and before they knew it it was evening and they had managed to keep entertained in spite of the storm. But when the next morning showed no improvement in the



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THERE WERE THREE OF THEM



weather, the amusement problem began to assume a serious aspect.

"It's the meanest thing I ever heard of," grumbled Dorothy to her mother, flying into her dressing-room as soon as she had seen what the probabilities were. "Here's Marie's visit being all spoiled, for we're having to keep cooped up in the house the whole time, and there's absolutely nothing to do indoors in summer—not a living thing."

Mrs. Everest drew the comb through her long hair and smiled compassionately, for Dorothy looked very fierce and mutinous with her knitted brows and scowling eyes.

"I am sorry that your plans are being interfered with, pussy," she said kindly, "but you are not the only one who is being rained on, and it is foolish to waste time and strength scolding against things that you can't change. Now scamper and dress, for it is late, and after breakfast we'll see what can be done."

When her mother said "we'll see what can be done," Dorothy always knew that it meant fun ahead, so she smoothed the wrinkles out of her face and trotted off to her room to shake Marie awake and tell her that it was "a dear

little day—raining kittens and puppies, and she'd better get up and say what she was going to do about it."

"Oh, dear! Is it really bad again?" yawned Marie, lazily.

"Yeppy, and we've got to think up a whole new program, for I declare to goodness I won't do a single one of the things we did yesterday. Now cudgel your brains and suggest something fine."

"Breakfast!" announced Helen from the doorway.

"Oh, goody!" cried Marie, bouncing to the floor in a trice. "Why didn't you tell me it was so late? Mamma would give me what Paddy gave the drum if she knew I was late to a meal. She told me particularly always to be on time. She said that was one of the things that showed whether a guest was a lady or not."

"If she didn't appear at table on time that'd show she was a gentleman?" mocked Dorothy.

"Go down stairs and let me dress in peace," cried Marie, brandishing a towel at her. "Please tell them I'm awfully sorry and don't let them keep anything warm. I only deserve

‘cold vittles.’ Honestly, do go! I’m so nervous I can hardly dress.”

“What are you exciting yourself for?” demanded Helen innocently, but with an unusual twinkle in her quiet eye.

“Because I’m not anywhere near ready, and you said breakfast is served.”

Helen pretended to look injured. “Why, I did not. I didn’t say any such thing,” she insisted.

Marie appealed to Dorothy. “She did, too, didn’t she?”

“I did not,” repeated Helen. “And I’m sure I don’t see why you should be in such a dreadful fluster all of a sudden. All I said was ‘breakfast.’ I didn’t mention a single thing about it’s being served; it’s nowhere near being served and I wouldn’t tell a wrong story, would I? But it’s a pity if I can’t say ‘breakfast’ without—”

But Marie had made a sudden dash at her with the sponge, and Helen had to scamper, or she would have been, if not the worse, decidedly the wetter for her joke. Dorothy laughed and Marie turned to her toilet with a will, saying, meanwhile:

"Do you know, I think Helen is perking up. I see it every day. I think it does her lots of good to be with you, for she catches your jolly ways and they make her ever so much more attractive. When I first came she was awfully quiet and I didn't think she was a bit knowing, but she seems to be getting more and more awake all the time, and every once in a while she does something that shows that she really has some fun in her, if it could only be brought out."

Dorothy shrugged her shoulders.

"She sometimes sets me 'most crazy," she declared. She's so good and obedient I feel like—throwing sticks at her. It makes me want to shock her to have her always so innocent and gentle. At first you couldn't get a joke into her head, not unless you hammered it in with a hatchet, and she took whatever I said in dead earnest. But lately I think, myself, she's blossomed out some, and is getting to know that many a jest word's spoken in truth. I don't know what sort of people she's been with all this time. They must have been a stupid lot not to have taught her to know a joke when she sees one. No—the trouble is, she didn't see

one. Honestly, I think this is the first time in her life she ever tried to be funny."

"Poor Helen!" said Marie, with real pity in her voice.

"You needn't pity her. It isn't every one who tries and succeeds, I can tell you. She really made me laugh. She was so quiet and serious about it, and you looked so blank when you found out the truth. I hope she'll do it again. It'll agree with her constitution."

As the girls walked into the dining-room, arm in arm, Mrs. Everest came forward to meet them with hands out, a hearty "good-morning," and a kiss to start the day with.

"It does one's heart good to see such bright faces when it is so gloomy outside," she said, and then they all took their seats at the table.

"We'll have to breakfast without papa," she said, as Dorothy looked curiously at his empty place. "He was called to town to-day on important business, and he had to catch the early train."

"He'll get soaking wet," observed Dorothy.

"I'm afraid so," returned her mother, gravely.

"But I wouldn't mind that if only—if only—"

"If only what?"

"If only that were all. He could, at least, protect himself against the rain."

Even Dorothy noticed the peculiar emphasis her mother laid on the last word. It was as much as to say that there might be other things against which he couldn't protect himself. She wondered what they were, and the wonderment brought with it a decided feeling of uneasiness. She was threatened with one of her sudden fits of silence, but nipped it in the bud, and began to chatter as fast as she could make her tongue go.

"What could they do to-day? Had her mother thought of anything? If the rain didn't stop soon they might try fishing from the upper windows. What did you s'pose they would catch? Now, don't say 'cold!' That's an ancient one."

She did not wait for any one to reply to her questions, and Mrs. Everest, who believed that she understood all her moods, thought she was trying to work off her restlessness and hidden rebellion against the dismal weather, and looked at her soberly with disapproving eyes.

"Oh, come," cried the girl, abruptly, catching her mother's gaze, but veering away from it im-



mediately, "let's go to the—attic-rondacks. There are Indian clubs and dumb-bells and a horizontal-bar and all up there, and if I don't work off some of my extra steam I'll have a conniption."

"Oh, yes," cried Helen, "I never thought of the gymnasium. Papa had the garret fixed up as a kind of one for us. Dorothy can do lots of hard things, and it's real fun to watch her. But I s'pose you know all about it? Dorothy says they made you all do calisthenics and that kind of thing at the Seminary."

But before they could get out of their chairs the sound of wheels made them start to the window, and behold! there was the Barclay machine, and in it were Elizabeth and Eleanor, waving and gesticulating and eager to get out.

"We simply couldn't stand it another minute," cried Elizabeth as soon as they were fairly inside the hall. "Eleanor and I worried through yesterday, but when we saw what to-day was going to be, we just struck and said we wouldn't bear it another minute. So here we are. May we stay a while, Mrs. Everest?"

"Indeed you may—and welcome! Dorothy,

take Nellie's hat and sack, and Helen, daughter, please go and tell Mrs. Barclay's man that the young ladies will not be home to luncheon. We are going to keep them here and have a rainy-day party. Off with your things, girls, and make yourselves at home."

## CHAPTER XVI

### KILLING TIME

It was easy enough to say "make yourselves at home," but Dorothy wondered what under the sun she was going to do with two extra guests when she and Marie and Helen hadn't known what to do with themselves before. "Making themselves at home" wasn't all that was necessary by any means, and, for the life of her, Dorothy could not think of anything amusing enough to offer them as entertainment. She knew that Eleanor and Elizabeth did not care to read. Helen was barred out from vigorous exercise by her—Dorothy called it "plain laziness"—and Dorothy herself abominated needlework. So there the case stood. What one could do the others wouldn't, and nothing just adapted to every one's needs seemed to present itself.

While she was still cudgeling her brains, and the rest were standing about, waiting for the word to be said that would start the ball rolling

in some direction, John appeared in the doorway, and, with a respectful jerk of his forefinger to his forehead, announced: "There's a young person outside, 'm, who 'as seen the Colonel's hadvertisement in the paper and 'as hanswered it, 'm. Mr. Beech's mare, 'm, is in the stable, 'm."

"Oh, goody!" shouted Dorothy. "Are you sure the horse is the right one, John? Where in the wor'd did he find her?"

"Yes, miss. I'm sure, miss. The mare was stopped about a mile this side of Cornwall bridge, 'm. It was plain to see she had bolted, an' easy to 'ead 'er off, for she was dead beat, an', by that time, was just runnin' more from force of 'abit, as you might say, than hanything helse."

"I'm so glad," cried Marie, with a deep-drawn sigh of relief. "I never would have gotten over it if anything had happened to her."

At the first pause Elizabeth and Eleanor set up a clamor to know what it was all about, and, while the girls were trying to explain, Mrs. Everest directed John to bring the "young person" to her.

"Tell the young man I will see him in here," she said.

John ducked and saluted. "Hexcuse me, 'm. Who did you say, 'm?"

"The young man," repeated the lady. "I want to give him the reward Colonel Everest offered to any one who should find and return the horse. If he has brought her back he has fairly earned the money."

A quizzical smile spread over John's broad, ruddy features. He opened his lips as if to say something, and then, thinking better of it, closed them again and backed slowly toward the door.

"Certainly, 'm!" he responded after a moment, as he disappeared.

"Why, I should have thought you would have died with fright," ejaculated Elizabeth, looking at the two heroines with round eyes.

"Just think!" exclaimed Eleanor. "Why, the lightning and thunder were perfectly paralyzing. I was completely petrified and I was safe and sound indoors. Weren't you absolutely crazy, cousin Agnes?"

Mrs. Everest smiled. "Well, no, Nellie. I can't say I was at all crazy, but I was very anxious. Helen and I both felt greatly distressed and we were deeply relieved when papa

came back and assured us that our girls were safe."

"He was so drenched that his clothes dripped puddles and he was covered with mud spatters from head to foot. You ought to have seen him" cried Helen.

"Why, I wonder—" began Dorothy, but stopped with her sentence half finished to watch John leading in a girl of about her own age, who hung back awkwardly and seemed greatly abashed at the sight of so many people. She was poorly dressed, and just now her calico skirt hung limp with moisture which made it look cheaper still; but everything she wore was neat and tidy; and Dorothy noticed that her rough little hands were as clean as soap could make them.

John pushed her forward and then flourished his arm toward her with the air of a showman exhibiting his animals.

"This is the young—person, 'm," he announced, giving the girl another shove that brought her directly in front of Mrs. Everest's chair, where she stood looking down at the floor and fumbling her skirt with nervous fingers.

"Why, you don't mean to say that you stopped the horse and brought it back," broke in Dorothy, pushing toward the country child and addressing her point-blank.

The stranger half-raised her eyes and gave Dorothy a bashful glance from under her eyelids.

"Yes'm," she murmured.

"Why, I don't see how you ever did it in the world. Were'n't you awfully scared? How did you know it was running away?"

"I was under a shed," said the low, hesitating voice, "waiting for it to clear off a little so I could go home. I have to go to the hotel every morning early with vegetables and fruit, and they'd kept me this day doing chores because the house was full and one of the girls had left. And when I got about half-way home the storm came up and I didn't want to get my clothes wet, so I went under a shed, and by and by I heard the sound of horse's hoofs trampling and I looked out and saw that the saddle was empty, and it came over me in a flash that there was a runaway, and so I just—thought I'd better stop it. I searched back over the road to see if I could come on the owner—I saw it was a lady's saddle and I

was afraid she'd been thrown—but I couldn't find any one, and after a bit, seeing the rain wasn't going to hold up, I took the horse home and stabled it along with our cow in the barn. I don't think it's caught cold, for I rubbed it down as well as I could and covered it up and gave it some spirits that a horse doctor left at our house once when Galloper was sick. I did just what I seen—I mean saw—him do for Galloper."

"Who's Galloper?" demanded Dorothy, as the girl came to a pause and began painfully fingering her skirt again.

"He was our horse. He died last spring."

"Did the horse-doctor kill him?"

The girl looked up at her aslant and her mouth twitched up at the corners. "No, he didn't. Galloper died all by himself. I guess he was too old to live any longer."

"And have you another horse in his place?" asked Mrs. Everest.

"No, ma'am. We couldn't get one. When I take my vegetables and things to the hotel Mr. Flint, near us, he sometimes lets me ride in his wagon, and he always takes my baskets and brings them home again."



"Did Mr. Flint let you ride here this morning? Now?"

"Oh, no ma'am. I just walked."

"In all this rain?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Mrs. Everest rose hastily. "Before we say another word," she exclaimed impulsively, "this child must be rested and fed. If you came from Cornwall you must have walked at least six miles. You poor little girl! But why didn't you get into the saddle and at least save yourself that way?"

"I didn't like to, ma'am. Besides, I left the saddle home to dry."

With motherly hands Mrs. Everest led her upstairs, the others following full of interest and curiosity, and before very long Mary Kalley was simmering in a warm bath and gazing in delight upon the little pile of clean linen that she was to put on in place of her own rain-soaked garments.

"I should think you'd just hate to have her wear your underclothes," observed Eleanor to Helen, "a common girl like that."

"Dear Nellie," interposed Mrs. Everest quickly, "Mary Kalley seems to me to be quite

an uncommon girl. John has just told me that she not only helps to support her poor mother who is afflicted with hip-disease but that she is studying hard, as well, and hopes in time to fit herself for teaching. These things of Helen's will not be contaminated, you may be sure, by such a girl as that. Helen, dear, where is your double-gown—the pink one? It will be just the thing for her to slip on when she comes out and is eating her breakfast."

Eleanor gave her head a toss and exchanged a significant look with Elizabeth, while Helen ran off to get the gown, and Dorothy busied herself stripping her mother's little tea-table upon which Mary's breakfast was to be spread.

The girl herself looked so rosy and glowing when she reappeared that it was a pleasure to look at her. Her plain, freckled little face had been scrubbed till it shone and her eyes fairly danced with excitement. She gave a long-drawn sigh of delight as Mrs. Everest slipped the dainty double-gown over her head, and if it had been made of the richest of damask instead of mere woolly flannel she could not have touched it with more respect.

The girls left her to herself and Mrs. Everest while she was eating her breakfast.

"It must make her feel so bashful to have us all standing around staring at her," declared Elizabeth, with unexpected sympathy.

Eleanor felt that any remark she might make to the contrary would be unpopular, so she shut her lips together and contented herself with thinking: "Pooh, a girl like that, bashful! Why, who ever heard of that sort of people feeling things like we do."

If the others had started a subscription for Mary Kalley she would have joined in with alacrity, for she was generous enough with her money, but to take her up as Mrs. Everest was doing and treat her as an equal—well, that was asking a little too much, and, for her part, Eleanor didn't mean to submit to it.

She followed after the rest to the gymnasium in a sort of inward rage against what, she knew, her mother would condemn as disgraceful, and she felt it was "too bad of Cousin Agnes" to put her in a position where she would have to come in contact with such a person as that—for she knew that Mary Kalley was to be kept to luncheon, eat at their table, and be

treated in every way with consideration and respect.

"It's as plain as preaching," she sputtered indignantly to Marie. "All she came for is the reward. She saw Colonel Everest's advertisement in the paper and she wanted to get the money. Who wouldn't walk through the rain for a reward like that? I mean, who wouldn't if they were common people who needed it; of course, we wouldn't."

"Dear me," laughed Marie, good-naturedly, "I would walk six miles myself any day for such a nice, fat little pocketful. I don't blame her a mite if she did look forward to it."

"She thought it would be very touching to be all wet and soppy and tired. I dare say she thought that when Colonel Everest saw her he'd double it or something. Coarse girls like her think everything out, and are just as calculating and sharp-witted as they can be."

"Come," cried Dorothy, abruptly, "let's see who can vault over the horizontal-bar. It's lots of fun and splendid exercise. Helen, you be judge and say which does the best. Here's the pole, Marie. You lead."

"Why, we can't, you goosie, without our gymnasium suits," objected Marie.

"Oh, yes, we can. I've let the bar down low, and it'll be all the more fun to see which one does best. Even if we do trip we can't hurt ourselves much. I'll go first if you're afraid to," and off darted Dorothy and cleared the bar at a bound.

Marie followed and Eleanor came after, Elizabeth bringing up the rear. Then the bar was lifted up a notch, and off they went again, but this time with less success, for Dorothy just scraped it, Marie floundered, and the only one who really took it clear was Eleanor. The higher the bar was raised the greater grew the sport, for the girls were bound not to be balked, and their skirts played them all sorts of tricks, which held them back and made them stumble.

Once in the swing of it they had no trouble in finding entertainment. When strength gave out and breath grew short from the vigorous exercise and much giggling, they had a spelling-match, in which Dorothy took the "booby prize," much to her own amusement and Helen's disgust.

"If I'm ever rich," cried she with a jolly

laugh at her own expense, "I'll have a sort of a circulating dictionary made: to circulate round me, you know. And then when I don't know how to spell a word all I'll have to do will be to turn to my dic— No, I'll call it Richard: that's more respectful. Let's not play this any more. Let's try machine-made poetry."

"Machine-made poetry," inquired Eleanor. "What's that? How do you do it?"

"Oh, sort of like 'Consequences.' Come on and try anyhow," and Dorothy distributed her slips and pencils impartially to all, giving an encouraging pat on the back to those who looked especially glum and hopeless. Soon heads were bent and pencils moving, and then, with a little rustle of folding paper and some giggling, the slips were passed. Again there was silence while each wrote a question. When this had been accomplished and the slips were folded over once more and passed on, the time for settling down to business had arrived.

It took a long time before "genius" could be induced to "burn," but the poets felt it glow at last, and then there were cries of—

"Oh, jolly! Mine's done."

"Hush! You put me all out!"

"I can't think of the word I want."

"I'll never be able to get mine done if you interrupt me so."

"Please don't scrooge over against me like that: you joggle my elbow."

They had to wait until all were finished before the general reading could take place, so Dorothy and Eleanor, who were first in the field, had to curb their impatience, and, what was more difficult, their tongues, so the others could write in peace. Helen was the last to say "Done!" and then, with a final exchange of slips, the fun began.

Marie read first: from the slip Elizabeth had handed her.

"The word is 'butter,'" she announced with dignity. "The question is: 'What will the weather be to-morrow?' (that's your writing Dorothy): the poem is,

"The weather to-morrow I think will be fair,  
The moon looks like butter to-night.  
Papa will go fishing no matter what air,  
And I hope he'll bring bass home at night."

"Great applause from the pit," quoted Dorothy, stamping and clapping vigorously.

"But 'night' and 'night' rhyme too much, it seems to me."

"I couldn't think of a different word," apologized Elizabeth.

"Why didn't you say 'bass home to bite'? that would have been all—allit—alliteration, and it would have shown what you mean to do with the bass when you got him home, in the second place. Go on, Eleanor! Your turn next."

"Word, 'unnatural': question, 'When is paper money first mentioned in the Bible?'" announced Eleanor promptly, in a short, business-like way. 'Poem's:

"'Unnatural mental effort which my spirit totes,  
Paper money first mentioned in the Bible must mean notes.'"

Marie blushed crimson and began to apologize before the applause which greeted her "effort" had fairly stopped.

"I know 'totes' is queer," she explained, "but if I said 'hate' or 'loathe' or 'abominate,' it wouldn't have rhymed with notes."

"You 'done noble,'" broke in Dorothy, "unnatural mental effort' is perfectly fine. Sounds like Browning or some of those. Now, Helen?"



"The word on mine is," began Helen hesitating and bending diffidently over the slip she had taken from Eleanor; "the word is 'brook,' and the question is, 'Why unhappy, restless soul?'"

"'Because, dear friend, it is so wet,  
That awful, fishless little brook,  
And I'm not one to aught but fret,  
When naught will bite my little hook.'"

The applause was so instant and genuine that Eleanor felt it at once.

"I s'pose it would have been better if I hadn't let 'aught' and 'naught' come together that way," she ventured modestly.

"Oh, no," said Dorothy quickly "they're real poetry-words; always put 'em in when you can." She took up the slip she held and declaimed with force:

"Word: 'anchor': question, 'what of it?'  
The poem is short—but sweet.

"'While anchor you fish,  
We will have a good dish.'"

Poor Helen squirmed with embarrassment and grew scarlet and white by turns, but the rest of them enjoyed her effusion hugely, and laughed till the windows rattled.

"Now my turn," shouted Elizabeth. "I got it from Dorothy, so it's hers. And I think it's the best of the lot. The word is 'oysters'—

"We seem to run to 'fish and bivalves,' as the sign says in the market," interrupted Dorothy.

"The word is 'oysters,'" repeated Elizabeth, sternly, with a special look of warning; "the question is 'Where did the river rise?' Now listen to the poem. Ahem!

"Where did the river rise  
Well, I don't know.  
Perhaps 'twas in the dewy fields  
Where beauteous flowers grow.  
Or on a rocky mountain side  
'Mid everlasting snow.  
But deep embedded in its sunny sand  
No oysters lie, I'll have you understand."

"Crown her queen of May," shouted Marie, enthusiastically.

"Rocky Mountain side. Why didn't you stay nearer home and say the Catskills!" demanded Eleanor, laughing.

Oh, Dorothy, it is really a beautiful poem! How could you ever do it?" cried Helen, deeply impressed and in thorough seriousness.

"But it isn't true," insisted Eleanor, snatching

the slip from Elizabeth and reading the poem over eagerly. "I don't believe there is 'everlasting snow' on the side of the Rocky Mountains—whatever there may be at the top; and the sand at the bottom of a brook isn't sunny—how could it be?"

Dorothy shrugged her shoulder carelessly and laughed.

"I didn't mean the Rocky Mountain range," she corrected good-humoredly; "just any mountains that happened to be rocky—some are, you know, but it doesn't matter— Why—what in the world! that you, Hilda?"

The maid smiled and nodded, at the head of the stairs.

"Yes, miss. And your mamma says will you please come to luncheon. It is served."

The poets scrambled to their feet in a body, but Eleanor managed to catch Elizabeth's arm as they passed down the stairs and whispered indignantly in her ear:

"If they put me next to that—that Kalley thing at the table, I'll just get up and go. I won't stand it."

## CHAPTER XVII

### HELEN'S DRESS

MRS. EVEREST met them at the dining-room door and assigned them their places with cordial smiles and a kind word for each. The "Kalley thing" was nowhere to be seen.

Dorothy had forgotten all about her, but now she suddenly remembered, and asked curiously, "Why, where is she? I thought she was going to stay and get lunch and rewards and everything else."

Her mother smiled. "And I thought so too, pussy," she said. "I hoped so. She had done us such a service that I wanted very much to show her some little appreciation, but I could not induce her to stay, and she would not hear of the reward at all. I pleaded and pleaded with her, but she only shook her head and said: 'No, no. I can't take it. Please don't ask me. What I did wasn't anything, and now I am gladder than ever I did it. I couldn't take money for just doing what was right.'"

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Dorothy, completely taken aback by such an unexpected show of pride in the "common girl."

"I think nothing would have induced her to sit down at the table with us," went on Mrs. Everest. "She certainly is a most sensitive and high-spirited child. When papa comes home we must talk it over and see how we can get around her objections. It will have to be very delicately done, for she will not endure patronage. I feel very humble. That child has given me a lesson in dignity that I shall not soon forget."

Eleanor was silent in the midst of the general chatter. Somehow she felt as if she had been struck in the face. Here she has been vowing that she would not demean herself by sitting at luncheon with the country girl, and lo! the country girl had turned the tables and refused to sit at luncheon with her. It had never occurred to her before that there might be a pride of poverty as well as wealth.

Mrs. Everest seemed to read her thoughts, for after a moment she said, gravely: "While I can't help respecting her spirit I don't feel that Mary was in the right. People who place too



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much importance on money or position and let that decide what friends they shall have are pitiable objects, whether they be rich or poor. A poor person can be just as much of a snob as a rich one, for, after all, they are both measuring the world by dollars. And if the rich one shuts the poor one off from him for lacking them, the poor one does the same to the rich one for having them, and the unkindness amounts to the same thing. I am really as much hurt by Mary's refusal to accept my little courtesy as she would have been if one of us had refused to show it to her. But the poor child meant no harm. She is like the rest of us—she doesn't understand."

Helen laughed. "That's just like you, mamma," she said, fondly. "You always end up by letting people off easy. Oh, I want to tell you something: You just ought to have heard the beautiful poem Dorothy made."

"Tattle-tale!" snapped Dorothy from across the table, flushing red and scowling.

Why in the world would Helen always persist in dragging what she did out in public? Wouldn't she ever learn that it made a person feel like sinking through the floor?

But there was no open squabble, and the meal



was a jolly one from this on to the end. After it was over Mrs. Everest herself helped them to get up tableaux, and so the day that had begun so gloomily passed off in the merriest manner possible for them all, and the two girls from the other house were almost driven to wish that the storm might last, so that they could repeat their experiment the next day.

But the storm did not last. At midnight the wind changed, and by morning all the clouds had been swept away; the sky was a dome of spotless, dazzling blue. So Marie's visit was not a bit "all spoiled," as Dorothy had predicted, but turned out to be a "howling success," for there was not a day that some jollification was not arranged, and neither Colonel nor Mrs. Everest spared any pains to make the girls' holiday a real festival-time.

They had sails on the shining white yacht which took them down the river and out upon the open Sound; clam-bakes in the woods, with Eleanor and Elizabeth as invited guests, and no end of garden-parties and afternoon teas, in which latter the other girls reveled and which Dorothy abominated. But the best of all was a straw-ride, which Colonel Everest himself ar-

ranged, and which proved the crowning success of the season. Even Eleanor had to admit that it was the "loveliest fun" she had ever had, and she thawed so under the influence of the jolly crowd of boys and girls who were invited to join in the excursion that Dorothy, to her own unbounded surprise, found herself feeling quite a liking for the New York girl. Somehow lately she hadn't been half so disagreeable as she was at first, and Dorothy declared that "if she could only stay a little longer she really believed she would grow kind of likeable."

But Eleanor had to go home, with added regret because the much-talked of tournament was to occur in the beginning of September, and the only way in which she could comfort herself was by eating humble-pie to the extent of asking "Cousin Agnes" if she might not come and make them a visit in October.

Dorothy was not entirely pleased at the prospect, but she forgot it in the pleasure she took in every precious minute of Marie's visit, which exceeded Eleanor's by only a week.

She wanted to make the most of every moment, and when the dreadful day actually arrived and Marie steamed away from them, waving and

nodding tearfully from the car-window. Dorothy just gave way and had a "good cry" right before everybody in the station.

She was contrary and cross for the rest of the day, and though both Helen and her mother did their best to divert her mind she would not be comforted.

The long summer was drawing to a close, and with the first of September came hints of autumn, but the weather remained hot and sultry. The long drives behind Fidgets commenced again, and Dorothy felt that when the tournament was over she would be quite ready to return to the Seminary—only it was not certain that she was to go to the Seminary again. If something (she did not know what) happened she and Helen would both spend a year there, but if it didn't, Colonel Everest intended to take a house in New York and the family would be kept together.

Helen came in one day, radiant and excited, from a short drive which Dorothy had managed to escape.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, as eagerly as she could speak, "just guess what has happened? I met Mrs. Beech, and she told me to tell you that after the tournament next week she's going to

have a few young people to dine and dance, and she said she was going to ask if we—Dorothy and I—couldn't come. Please let us. Oh, do, please. We're not too young—Mrs. Beech said it was going to be for 'young people,' just the same ones we had at our straw-ride. Say 'yes' when she asks you. Beg her to say 'yes,' Dorothy."

The two girls followed her upstairs with their gay clamor, and it was only when she reached her own room that she turned upon them suddenly and cried out, with a despairing sigh:

"Yes, you ridiculous children! Now, may I be permitted to write a letter in peace?"

But no; they still besieged her with anxious questionings as to what they should wear.

At length she seated herself in her rocking-chair and the two girls knelt on the floor beside her, with elbows in her lap and ears pricked up to hear whatever she might say.

"This is only in self-defence," she explained, laughing, and for a little while the three were as merry over their plans as though there were never a ripple on the placid surface of their content.

Helen's toilet came first, and they had great sport settling the vexed question of what it

should consist of, for the girl seemed to grow by the minute, and many of the pretty frocks she had brought home from abroad were even now showing signs of shrinkage.

"I wish we didn't have to bother about the fit," she sighed, impatiently. "Why can't people just stay one size, or else why can't clothes be made so they can grow with them? I like pretty things as well as anybody, but fussing over hems and tucks and all that, bothers me to death. Now, for instance, if my white mull hadn't seemed to shrink while I wasn't looking I might have worn that, but, as it is, it won't do, will it, mamma? I know all the rest of the girls are going to put on their spandy best and I don't want to look like a giraffe beside them. Do you s'pose there's any place in New York where I could get something that would be pretty enough without having to bother about going down and being fitted, and all that? My hat will do, don't you think so? and I've plenty of gloves, though now I come to think of it I may have spread in the hands and outgrown them all. Oh, me! s'posing I have?"

Dorothy gave a laugh at Helen's crestfallen expression.

"If you will be one of the tall, willowy ones you'll have to pay for it," she said. "Now, that's where I have the better of you. I grow, but I grow gradually. I don't shoot up an inch a month. When I was at the Seminary I thought my last year's organdie wouldn't fit me even if I let down the tuck under the hem, but it does after all, and—"

"I think, dearie, that your wish was father to that thought," quoted her mother.

"Oh, Dorothy, you can get up easier than I can, would you mind going to my bureau and getting my glove-case? If I should have outgrown all those lovely gants—"

Dorothy sprang to her feet and hurried off on her errand. She hoped, for Helen's sake, that the gloves would still fit, but, if they shouldn't, Helen could easily get new ones. In her own case it would be different. She had to wear things over and over and over, but Helen had nothing to do but spend the money that was lying away safe in some bank or somewhere for her. Dorothy did not begrudge her one cent of her allowance, but she couldn't help feeling sometimes that it would be pleasant to know that she herself had a

penny or two that she might do just as she liked with.

She returned in a minute, and they held their breath while the life-and-death matter of trying on one of the gloves was attended to.

As the last button slipped into the button-hole Dorothy gave a long-drawn sigh of relief. "Thank goodness! The country is saved!" she cried, but Helen could see that she was really glad.

Nowadays she was very kind to Helen, and the elder girl felt that if things could only continue as they were she would have nothing left to wish for. As for Dorothy herself she was really making a great fight to be good, and trying with all her might to control her gusty temper, that seemed to rise at the slightest word sometimes—that is, if the word touched on the tender point of her relation with her stepfather and sister. To be reminded in any way of the time when she had thought of them as "interlopers" made her wretched and irritable, and at these times she would vent her exasperation on the first person who came in her way. What her real state of mind was it would have been difficult to say, but her attitude had changed

toward Colonel Everest and Helen, and only the remembrance of the many hurts she had given them prevented her from telling them so outright. The remembrance of these hurts stung her continually, and, strange to say, often led to half-remorseful, half-rebellious outbreaks that they could not have been expected to understand, while she did not altogether understand them herself. All she knew was that she would have given worlds to be able to say the simple words "forgive me!" and that in the meantime she could not bear to feel that people whom she had so repeatedly stabbed had not even reproached her for it, but had continually tried to shield her and repay evil with good. It made her seem like a poor, detestable creature to herself, and that in turn made her war against them for making her feel so. It was all a dreadfully tangled skein of reasoning that went on in her undisciplined little mind, but she either had not the power at present, or the desire to unravel it.

"Yes, the country is saved," repeated Helen, "as far as the gloves go. And I guess we can manage about the dress somehow, don't you, mamma?"

"I am sure we can," replied Mrs. Everest,



amused at the seriousness of the girls' faces. It was as if they were discussing the most weighty matters of state, but she let them chatter on, because, after all, it was innocent enough, and when one has growing girls to deal with it is just as well to "let good enough alone," and only pick at what is really injurious. As Dorothy sometimes said when she felt herself to be unnecessarily found fault with: "A nag's a pretty small horse."

"It would be sort of fun to go down to New York and skirmish around for a day," she put in. "I'd like it just for a change, and we could have a nice lunch, and you could be fitted, and it would be a real lark. But mamady, what'll I wear?"

"Why, the only thing you have, little daughter, that is suitable," said the unsuspecting mother, treading on the edge of the volcano with no idea of danger. "I want you both to be in white, and the pretty frock Helen sent you for commencement will be just the thing, dear, it is so simple and yet—"

"Helen!" repeated Dorothy, in a strange smothered voice, echoing her mother's word with a look of bewilderment and almost horror,

her face growing very pale and her hands cold and unsteady.

"Why, yes, of course. You knew Helen sent you the frock, dear. I had written you that I could not afford it, and then one day Helen and papa formed a little conspiracy and got your measurements, by bribery and corruption, and went and ordered the affair. It was entirely Helen's idea and gift. I had nothing whatever to do with it."

By this time Dorothy's blood had come rushing back to her cheeks in an angry flood, and she turned and faced Helen, who had drawn back a little and was very white and still.

But after looking at her for an instant in a way the older girl could not understand, she turned abruptly about and ran out of the room, one heavy sob escaping her just as she reached the door.

At the sound, Helen sprung to her feet.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, "What is it? Why does she feel so? I must go to her—I—"

But Mrs. Everest stretched out her hand and stopped her. For once her sweet face was set and stern.

"No, Helen," she said. "I will go. Don't

grieve, darling," and kissing the poor, anxious face, she followed in Dorothy's footsteps and knocked upon her door. At first she received no answer, but, after a second, Helen heard the latch spring back and the knob turn, and a voice husky with sobs, exclaim passionately :

"To think of it! To think of it! U'll never wear it, never!" and then the door closed again.

Helen bent her head in her hands, and, wounded and smarting, cried as if her heart would break.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FOR CHARITY'S SAKE

MRS. EVEREST closed the door behind her gently and then turned to Dorothy, who had run and flung herself upon the bed face downward. She was still sobbing heavily, and her shoulders shook with the fierceness of each shuddering breath. Her mother stood looking down upon her with a dead weight of misery at her heart. What should she say? How should she act? She dreaded to speak the first word lest it should happen to be the wrong one and rouse the wayward child to greater anger. Somehow it seemed to her that Dorothy was growing more stubborn day by day, that her moods were getting more variable; that she was becoming harder. It caused a dull ache to creep into her heart, the thought of Dorothy's shutting herself away from all the good in the world and in herself. Sometimes she almost lost hope that she would ever recover her old nature—she almost doubted

if the old nature could have been what she had once thought it, brave and honest and kind.

If there had ever been any tenderness in her, how could she bear to hurt an innocent creature.

Dorothy shook her head mutely when her mother asked her why she had said she would not wear the dress. At first she refused to open her lips, but her mother for once was stern and unmoved; she insisted on an answer.

"I can't—I can't," was all she could get in way of reply.

The girl had stopped crying, though, and now the only sound to be heard in the room was the twittering of the canary, and at intervals her own deep sighs.

At last Mrs. Everest sat down in the little chair by the bedside, and putting out her cool hand placed it kindly upon Dorothy's hot, feverish one—the one that held her handkerchief, all wet and crumpled, rolled into a little hard ball and closed in her palm.

"Dorothy, I want to tell you a little about Helen. It is not much; but I wish you to know it."

The girl did not stir and the mother went on:

"Years ago Colonel Everest married a beau-

tiful girl. She was the daughter of a very wealthy man, and had everything one might fancy to make her happy, and her life sweet—beauty, riches, and better still, a lovely soul.

“Only one thing she lacked, and that was health. She was more or less of an invalid. She and her young lover were married, and for a year were entirely happy. Then Helen was born to them, and the poor young mother died, bequeathing to her little daughter her great fortune, and, in all probability, her malady.

“That is all, except that for years her father has been separated from her, because he was always stationed at posts to which he felt he could not bring the fragile child. And so, in spite of her wealth, Helen has been a poor child.

“Her first moments of real happiness have come since I—since we—came to her, she says; and you cannot know, Dorothy, how my heart yearns over her, and how I pray God she may be enabled to escape from her sad inheritance.

“Just fancy poor little Helen with the shadow of death always hanging over her! There are chances that her constitution may strengthen, so that the heart will outgrow its weakness and be able to throw off the disease; but there is

always the chance—but I cannot talk about it, it hurts me too much.”

Dorothy was sitting up by this time, and two large tears that had gathered in her eyes rolled glistening down her cheeks and dropped upon her clasped hands.

Her mother rose and walked to the window. Leaning her head against the frame she looked out into the garden which she did not see. Presently she came to the bedside again, and bending over, kissed Dorothy upon the forehead.

A gentle tap upon the door caused them both to start up quickly. It was Hilda, who came to say that Mrs. Beech was in the drawing-room and had especially asked to see Mrs. Everest and the “young ladies.”

“It is probably about the tournament, Dorothy,” said her mother. “Smooth your hair and be ready to come down in a moment or two. I will call Helen on my way.”

When she was once more alone, Dorothy went swiftly to the door and, locking it, went back to the bed and fell on her knees beside it.

“O, God,” she prayed, “please help me to be good. Make me to be good!” She repeated

the words over and over, her voice trembling with intensity and her hands clasped so tightly that the nails made marks in the tender flesh.

"O, God, make me to be good, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

It was not much of a prayer, perhaps, but it was all she could find words for just now. Her whole heart was bursting with the desire to repair the wrong she had done and to be prevented from doing more.

She got up from her knees with a lighter heart and a new feeling of strength for self-mastery. She bathed her flushed face and re-braided her tumbled hair, and when it was all done, unlocked her door and went down-stairs.

When she reached the drawing-room she found Helen there before her, listening to Mrs. Beech's account of the preparation for the tournament. The lady rose and met her with a cordial kiss of welcome.

"So glad to see you, my dear," she said in her brisk, bright way. "Your mamma has made me happy by promising me you and Helen for dinner on tournament day. I have a young cousin visiting me from Albany, just about your age, and it will be charming for her to meet you."



You will be fine company for one another among all of us ancient folks. You have no idea," she said, clasping her tiny hands, "how overwhelmed I am with business. It is driving here and driving there all day and every day, to see about securing men to work, and that sort of thing. And as if that were not enough, a fund is being started for the hospital here—we want to build a new one—and I am going about begging for subscriptions. I've been quite successful, but—dear me! you can't fancy what work it is. Now to help me out a bit, you two girls will give me something—I know you will. Such a worthy object, you know. I don't speak about your parents—for I'm sure they will give generously—I know Colonel Everest of old. He was always benevolence itself; but you two girls—now tell me, won't you give me something for my hospital?"

Helen rose at once, and, hurrying up-stairs, came down with her purse in her hand, while Dorothy sat silent and ashamed. This was the first time she had really envied Helen her money.

"Here, Mrs. Beech," said Helen, giving her two bank-notes. "It's all I have just now, but

I will give you more as soon as I get my allowance. I guess papa will lend me some on my next month's if I tell him what it's for."

She did it very simply and unpretentiously, but it caused a sharp pang to shoot through Dorothy's heart as she saw how easy it was for Helen to give twenty dollars where she herself could scarcely offer so many cents. And she dearly loved to give, and would have parted with the last penny in her lean little purse if any one had asked for it.

"And you, dear?" said Mrs. Beech, turning to Dorothy. "You can spare me as much out of your pin-money as Helen, surely! Won't you add another twenty to this, so I can deposit a round forty in the bank?"

By this time Dorothy had managed to stammer out the beginning of an apology, when her mother explained kindly.

"The fact is, Mrs. Beech, our girls have not equal allowances. Dorothy would, in any case, be unable to give as much as her sister. But it is not because the impulse would not prompt her to do so. You must accept twenty dollars from me in Dorothy's name. Little daughter, will you get my purse?"

But Mrs. Beech stretched out a detaining hand.

"No, stay," she said. "Really, I think Dorothy's money will be all the brighter if she makes some little sacrifice to procure it. You girls are so clever nowadays, you ought to be able to earn twenty dollars very quickly. Now, suppose Helen and Dorothy rack their bright young brains for ways and means of earning some money for the fund. Won't you do it, girls? Really, the virtue in giving is in the sacrifice it costs. Not that I will not keep your bills, Helen, for I can't afford to lose one penny; but don't you think you can manage to spare me more by and by? More that you have earned, or are able to give through some sacrifice?"

Dorothy said: "Yes, I'll do what I can, but I don't know how I can earn any money. It doesn't seem to me I can do anything at all."

"I tell you, Dorothy," said Helen, "I know! We can embroider. I was taught at school, and I'll show you; and we can do an altar-cloth or something of that kind, and have the church people buy it. Do you think St. Thomas's would buy an altar-cloth of us, Mrs. Beech, if it were very handsome. I made a beauty once;

it took the prize at the exhibition of our work, and—we—could do another just like it—Dorothy and I. Don't you think they'd buy it, Mrs. Beech?"

"Why, yes, dear, if 'twas really handsome I would buy it myself and give it to them as an offering at Easter. And you will help, Dorothy?"

Dorothy was silent for a moment. She could not imagine herself sitting down demurely to stitch, with her brown little hands, at a white satin altar-cloth; she who had never hemmed even a kitchen towel in all her life.

"I don't know," she replied hesitatingly. "I should spoil it if I tried my hand at it. I'd better try to think of something else—some other way of getting the money. But I'm so stupid! There's nothing I can do, it seems to me, but play the banjo."

At this they all laughed, and Mrs. Beech playfully suggested that she go from house to house singing negro songs for pennies.

"You have a charming little voice! I've heard it and I know," she said, and then she rose and made ready to leave.

When she was gone, Dorothy started after

Helen who had become so interested in the altar-cloth idea that she could not wait, but was making haste to go to her own room and write to New York at once for materials and designs.

"Oh, Helen—" she said abruptly, and then stopped. She was going to go on immediately—as soon as that tightness in her throat would let her—but just then Colonel Everest came up the stairs and she turned away. She could not say what she had to say before him. So she went to her room and locked herself in and sat down upon the bed to consider.

She could not rid herself of her worry concerning the money for the hospital. It possessed her like a fever. She got up impatiently and went to her bureau, opened the top drawer and tumbled everything out of it—lace-frillings, handkerchiefs, perfumery and ribbons, fans and bits of gold and jewelry. She had not many treasures—at the most a few rings and a chain or two—but as she held them spread forth in her palm she wondered if by selling them she could get twenty dollars.

"It would be a sacrifice to do without my rings," she thought. Then came the remembrance of the giver, her mother, and she knew

that she could not part with them. Besides, they would not bring much, and she had not enough money to get to New York with—unless Helen should take her when she went to see about her dress—and then there would be no chance to escape and sell the bits unobserved. She shook her head at herself in the glass and suddenly a new thought popped into her mind.

“Jo, in ‘Little Women,’ sold her hair and got twenty-five dollars for it, and why shouldn’t I sell mine? It’s just as long and thick as her’s was, I guess. Every one likes my hair. How do you s’pose I’d look with a clean shave on the top of my head? Oh, sugar! what a fright, but that would be just the thing Mrs. Beech wants.” But here, as in the case of the jewelry, there loomed the obstacle of money to get to any place where she could dispose of her wares. She rather liked the hair plan, though. It would be such a gigantic sacrifice—only her mother would have to come in for a share of it too, for she knew it would hurt her sadly to see her poor lamb shorn. Still, that couldn’t be helped. Nothing else seemed so good a way of raising the money—for she repeated to herself

that she could not join in Helen's scheme. Besides, even if she should try, the real expense would fall on Helen, and the labor, too, and Helen—had enough to attend to as it was.

She tumbled the things back into her drawer helter-skelter and dropped into her rocking chair with her beloved banjo at her side.

Her mother, sitting on the veranda below heard the sounds of the voice and strings, and said, "She will delay so long that I'm afraid she will be hardly in time for dinner."

Helen, who was sitting beside her, smiled and said :

"Oh, never mind. Let her play, please. It rests her, she says; and sometimes, lately, mamma, Dorothy hasn't seemed to me to look very well. She has a real sad and tired look in her eyes. I s'pose it is because she is so unhappy. Poor Dorothy! But now maybe she'll get used to me—we'll have to be together so much doing the altar-cloth. I'm so glad I thought of it. But if it helps to make her like me a little it won't be a sacrifice, will it, mamma?"

Mrs. Everest passed her hand over her eyes and then glanced lovingly across at her young companion.

"You dear little girl," she said, "always so patient to wait and anxious to gain willful Dorothy's love. She will give it to you, darling, never fear. In fact, I think you have it already, only she is too 'proud' to surrender."

"But I don't believe she'll ever wear the dress," said Helen, wistfully, "she said she wouldn't—ever. I wish she didn't feel so. I wish she could have some of my money. I wish that she would take it. I wish—but anyway, she's going to do the altar-cloth with me," she concluded happily.

From above came the mellow notes of the odd little Creole lullaby, with now and then the sound of Dorothy's voice joining in crooningly.

Out toward the west the sun was glowing, a huge red disk, preparing to drop below the summit of the hazy hills. The birds were singing their "sleepy-songs." A robin, perched on the topmost bough of a large tree, carolled lustily, and farther away in the edge of a thicket came the rich trill of a brown thrush. From far off echoed a low-pitched bell.

From behind the bowed shutters Dorothy looked out upon the peaceful river, the green



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"I'M GLAD I'M ALIVE"



hills, the illuminated sky. She watched it all in silence and then a great wave of thankfulness swept over her.

"I'm glad I'm alive," she thought. "It is nice to be alive, only one ought to be so good to deserve it all. It is so beautiful!"

From up the river came a thin thread of smoke, which shone dark gray against the pale saffron of the sky. Dorothy watched it as it rose slowly, trying, she thought "to be a cloud," and then she waited, aimlessly watching still, for the steamer which caused it to become distinct and plain—more than a mere speck appearing from behind the steep riverbanks.

As it neared the wharf beyond, it gave a series of sharp whistles that seemed to wake the birds from their first nap and set them to twittering noisily. But the sounds produced a strange effect on Dorothy.

She sprang from her chair with a joyful bound.

"I have it! I'll do it! Just the thing!"

She was trembling with excitement. Her breath came in short gasps, and she had to hold on to the bed's foot for a moment to steady her-

self, she felt so suddenly dizzy with the brilliancy of the idea that had struck her.

"I needn't sell you, my poor old hair," she murmured, giving it a hasty pat. "I've an idea! Something better! Now I can get it! My red dress! my banjo! To-morrow morning—early! Oh, dear! How glad I am!"

## CHAPTER XIX

### HARD-EARNED GOLD

AFTER the first outburst of delight in her new-found plan, Dorothy set herself to work to contrive the ways and means of carrying it out. At first it had seemed easy enough, but she discovered, when she sat down soberly and considered, that it was far less easy than it had seemed. In the midst of her thinking she had to hop up and dress for dinner, and all the time she was seated at the table her brain was busy with her anxious thoughts, so that she scarcely knew what was going on about her, and even failed to reply to a direct question Helen put to her—simply because she did not hear it.

Her mother gave the elder girl a significant look, which meant "leave her to her own devices, Helen," but in her own heart she thought, "Oh, what shall I do? Will nothing touch her? I thought I had really softened her this afternoon in my talk about Helen, but it only seemed to have made her sulky and morose."

For she never doubted that her silence and seeming sullenness arose from that affair with Helen, and that Dorothy was nursing her fancied grievance and letting it rankle in her heart. That she could be planning to get money for the hospital did not enter her mother's mind. She had no other thought than that she would help Helen with the altar-cloth.

Next morning Dorothy's dressing seemed to take much more care and time than she usually gave it; and when she finally stood before her mirror, quite ready, she presented a very different appearance from her usual every-day gingham and cambric one.

Upon her feet, which were encased in black silk stockings, clocked heavily up the sides with red, were a pair of high-heeled Spanish slippers; her dress was of red cashmere, and her skirt but touched her ankles, while the bodice she wore was of black velvet, laced across the bosom with gold cord. Upon her head she set a coquettish little cap, and in her hand she carried her banjo.

A fantastic little figure she was in her fancy costume, and any one who saw her might well have wondered what madcap performance was on foot so early in the morning.

But no one did see her. She threw a long cloak over her shoulders and crept stealthily downstairs and out of the silent house before even the maids were stirring, munching a bit of bread and smacking her lips over a long draught of milk from a bowl.

It was a lovely morning. Dorothy exulted in the bright sunlight, the clear air, and the glancing river, and, more than all, in her own foolish project. She made straight for the wharf where the boats came in. By and by the "Mollie Elwell" arrived. The "Mollie" was an excursion boat that plied up and down the river, letting people on at every landing, and only returning to this point at sunset. It was too early for more than one or two stray passengers to board her, and so it was not long before Dorothy heard the shouts of the men preparing to cast off the ropes and draw back the gang-plank.

It was only then that she darted from her place of concealment and hurried breathlessly aboard.

As she flashed by the little group of men, who were either idling or busied about the pier, she thought she recognized one of the voices, but she

did not stop to convince herself, and made straight for the ladies' cabin, where she dropped into a wicker chair and almost cried with relief and excitement.

Suddenly her eyes were caught and fixed by a sign over the long mirror. It was a very innocent-looking sign, but it seemed to appall Dorothy:

BEGGING, PLAYING OF MUSICAL  
INSTRUMENTS,  
THE SALE OF NEWSPAPERS,  
PEDDLING,  
STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

That was how it read, and she stared at it for a full minute before she could take her eyes from the cheap little frame.

But suddenly she snatched up her banjo, hid it in the folds of her cloak, and rushed out upon the deck and above to the little pilot-house, where she knew the captain would be.



When Captain Murphy, who was a burly, good-natured man, saw the little figure in its long, dark cloak appear at his door without any warning he fancied he had to deal with some superior sort of beggar-girl and prepared himself to listen to her woes with patient charity. He was not a little surprised when the young woman begged for nothing more than his permission to sing and play her banjo upon the upper deck of the "Mollie Elwell."

"You see, sir," said Dorothy, breathlessly, "I want to earn money for a hospital, and I can't do anything but play the banjo and sing; and if you'd only let me do it on your boat, people might give me pennies, and it would be so nice! Please let me, sir. I won't be a nuisance; truly I won't. See! I'll show you what I mean."

Casting off her cloak she stood before him in her fantastic dress, and, holding her banjo in place, began to twang upon it the accompanying chords of an old plantation song.

But in an instant she stopped—almost before the captain realized that she had well begun—and said:

"That's all, sir. It won't be any harm, will it?"

"Well, I guess not—to any one but yourself, miss," replied the man with an odd look. "I don't much like the idea of your doin' it—for your own sake, for I can see you ain't the common kind, and it will be a stiff job for you to do. But your singing is A No. 1, and I like it first rate, and here's a quarter to begin the day with, and—oh, pshaw! if you will do it I s'pose you will an' I'll see no harm comes to you. Step right along with me, miss! Here, Jim, you see this young lady? Well, you see to it that she ain't—disturbed or—anything to-day, understand? She's going to give the passengers a treat on the trip, and they've got to treat her square, see?" and he led the way down the narrow stairs to the broad middle deck, where the awnings were flapping gayly in the brisk breeze and the camp-chairs were piled up in huge stacks, awaiting the coming of more passengers.

Few people were on board now, but at every landing many were sure to come until at last the decks would be crowded with excursionists, all jostling and pushing in order to secure the best chairs, the shadiest places, and the most room.

"It won't be long," explained the captain, "before the rush sets in. Now, here's where you'd better do your little act. And if you ain't treated right, just you let me know."

With this he left her, and went below to issue an order that she should not be molested.

Presently the boat stopped at a thriving town, where quite a crowd came on board, gathering on one side of the deck to call and wave good-byes to their friends who were left on the dock. Now was Dorothy's opportunity. She trembled violently as she stepped out upon the open space which the captain had pointed out to her; but as the boat swung forward she steadied herself, and taking her banjo and dropping her cloak she struck a few chords and began to sing.

The hubbub about her ceased and every one stood still and listened. She sang her best and after she had done with the first song the crowd clamored for more. Again and again she repeated her very newest and latest, as well as the older songs that every one knows and loves.

But the hardest part came when, with a pale face, she passed her cap around afterward, and coppers, five-cent pieces, and even dimes were dropped into it by people who did not seem to

think any too highly of her, whatever they might of her performance.

More people arrived, and she sang again. No one insulted her ; but it was not an easy task at best. After a time it grew stiflingly warm, and her hair clung in wet, loose curls about her temples. Her cheeks were flushed and her feet burned from the touch of the fiery boards of the sunny deck.

By and by people came who made rude remarks about her. She pretended not to hear, but they cut her just the same. She heard one pretty girl say to a companion :

"She sings well, of course, but she must be a bold, forward thing to be willing to do it before people, like this. But then, I suppose such girls have no modesty anyway."

Dorothy had very hard work to restrain her tears, but she kept resolutely on. Her pocket, into which she dropped the money she collected, grew quite heavy, and its load chinked merrily, when she moved and its sound encouraged her.

At noon she took a little rest, and managing to slip away to the lunch-counter, bought a thick, coarse sandwich and ate it in the darkest

corner of the cabin, where she crouched in order to be out of sight of the gaping crowd.

On the deck the sun blazed down on the white awnings. Babies wailed; children quarreled. Mothers made fretful complaints and fathers railed against everything in general and excursions in particular. Dorothy got very little in her cap now, for the boat had made its last landing on the up-trip, and was about to turn upon its homeward course. There were no new passengers to be amused by the novelty of her performance, and the old ones were too tired, warm, and impatient to care about it any longer. But she never gave up; and after a time the breeze grew cooler and more refreshing. Then the spirits of the pleasure-seekers returned, and pennies and nickels accumulated in her cap.

As it grew later in the afternoon the children who were fretful before from the heat grew fretful again from sleepiness, and Dorothy could not help feeling sorry for the wretched little bodies who were slapped and scolded and scared and then wondered at for not having a "good time."

From the depth of her heart she pitied them,

and played her liveliest tunes and sung her jolliest songs to entertain them and keep them awake. But it was so hard to get her voice to sound now. Her throat was throbbing and thick and her temples hammered away like pumps in an engine.

At five o'clock the boat stopped at a wharf not a great distance from her own landing-place. As it neared the pier she saw that it was crowded with people. A deck-hand said there had been a sale of fine horses in the place.

"Reg'lar thorough-breds," he observed. "Real blooded animals, owned by the swells round about. There's a lot of them nob's comin' on board."

Many of the excursionists crowded to the side of the deck to get a glimpse of the new passengers. But Dorothy did not venture from her place, and when the boat started again she commenced her singing with a grateful sense that it was for the last time.

In a moment several gentlemen appeared before her tired eyes, watching her as she sang and making low-voiced comments on her manner and appearance.

She was so weary that she could scarcely see

the boards on the deck at which she looked, but suddenly she felt her knees grow weak beneath her, her brain swim, and the fingers fall upon her larjo stiff and lifeless. She had raised her head and was looking straight into Colonel Everest's eyes. He was standing by the companion-way. His face was pale, but he showed no other sign of unusual feeling.

He simply looked at her fairly—and did not acknowledge her.

For an instant she felt as if some one had struck her a stunning blow; then with a mighty effort she recovered herself, and with a tightening at her heart and a mad throbbing in her throat, went on with hersinging.

"He is ashamed of me! He won't let them know," she thought. "Perhaps he will send me away after this—because he is so ashamed. But if he doesn't want them to know, I will act as if I weren't his—his—but I mustn't stop. I must go on, for it is for the sake of the sick ones—the ones like Helen, who may not—may not—get—well."

She saw some one step up to her father and seem to ask him a question. He nodded his head in assent at first, and then to some later

inquiry, shook it in denial, and the gentleman turned away. It was Mr. Beech.

How long Dorothy sang she did not know, but at last she stopped. Then came the hardest part of all; the going about with her out-held cap—her dumb begging for contributions.

Silver, paper money, and even a gold-piece were dropped into the cap. As she passed among the gentlemen she wondered in a dull way if she should fall at her stepfather's feet, or if it could really be that she would be able to stand before him and live through his cold, silent scorn of her—his treating her as if she were a poor beggar whom he would cast money to but nothing else.

She made her way to him and held out her cap. He dropped a gold coin into it, and then looked directly down at her, his eyes stern and angry as she had never seen them before—as she had not known they could be—his face set and severe.

She looked up at him, her face flushed and pathetic in its tiredness, her eyes large and dark and full of trouble. Her expression was full of pleading and a dumb begging for forgiveness, but her father met it blankly. With a stifled sob



and a quivering of her lip she turned aside and went forward on her way until she had made a complete circuit of the deck.

Then she was about to pass into the cabin, but was recalled and made to sing again—sing again before her father, who would not recognize her; sing again when she had thought she must die before. But she went bravely through it, and it was only when the boat blew its shrill whistle announcing its arrival at the pier that, flinging a graceful little nod to her enthusiastic audience, she suddenly disappeared through the cabin-door and was seen no more.

As the gentlemen sauntered ashore Dorothy went to the pilot-room to thank the captain.

"You look clean beat out," said the good-natured man, gazing down at her sympathetically.

Dorothy's chin quivered, but she only shook her head; she could not speak. She shrouded herself in her long cloak, holding out a small, unsteady hand, bade him a silent good-bye. Then she left the boat and toiled up the hill toward the Beech's. It was late when she reached her stepfather's house. Stealing noiselessly in through the rear door, she found refuge

in her room at last. Almost too exhausted even to think, she sank down upon her bed and lay there for some time just throbbing with pain and quivering with humiliation. She had been slighted, scorned, despised, and what she had meant for good had turned to be only ill.

What did her father mean by treating her so? Did he understand, or was it a crime she had committed, and was she too wicked to know it? Had she grown so bad that she did not recognize right from wrong?

"No; it couldn't be that. He must have understood the reason for it all, but he wanted to disown her, and—there was that throbbing, beating pain in her head, and oh! such a dull ache in her racked little throat.

The door opened and some one entered. Dorothy did not even turn her head. She felt a hand upon her shoulder, and then she heard her mother's voice very close to her ear.

"Dorothy," she said, "Christine told me she saw you come in. One of the men caught sight of you as you went aboard the 'Mollie Elwell' this morning, so we knew, at least, where you were. But we did not know what you were doing until—until—your father was forced to

witness your disgrace and—and—his own. But I will not say any more to you now. You must be worn out and in need of rest."

Dorothy felt the hand withdrawn from her shoulder, and knew that her mother was about to leave her. She leaped to her feet.

"Oh, mamma, mamma," she wailed, "say it all to me now! I don't know what you mean, but say it, say it! Only don't leave as if you didn't care. I'm not too tired to listen. I—I—"

Here her strength forsook her and she sank back upon the bed and sobbed. Her mother returned to her side, but only to look down at the prostrate, writhing form; not to touch it with her soothing, tender hand.

"I am sorry to see you like this, Dorothy," she said. "But after all, it is only what you have brought upon yourself. I cannot feel that your punishment is more severe than you deserve, for you have been more self-willed and obstinate than I supposed it was possible for even you to be. To disgrace yourself—to humiliate me—to put us all to shame for the sake of your paltry pride; for I will not believe it is hate of Helen that makes you refuse to wear the dress."

Dorothy leaped up, looking at her mother with wild, dilated eyes. "Dress!" she cried; "What do you mean? What—why—"

Then she stopped, as if she were slowly getting some faint idea of her mother's meaning, but could not, would not comprehend it yet.

"Why, the dress Helen sent you from Paris, and that you said you would not wear to the tournament. You cannot deceive me, Dorothy! I cannot help knowing what you are going to do with the money you all but begged to-day. Your father said you actually went about collecting money in your cap—money from strangers—in such a way! Oh, Dorothy, how could you humiliate us so, and degrade yourself, and all to get money to buy a—dress?"

The tone of her mother's voice as she said that word cut Dorothy like a two-edged sword.

For a second she was perfectly silent. Her sobbing had stopped, and then she said in quite an altered voice, harsh with excitement:

"And you think I did it for a—dress?"

Mrs. Everest waited a little before replying.

"There is nothing else left for me to think, Dorothy. I would like not to believe it, but I must not try to blind myself because I would

like to think you less blameworthy. You have changed so—oh you have changed so, child. I used to think you were so—different!" Her voice was unsteady with tears.

For answer Dorothy rose slowly to her feet and stood before her mother with no color in her face except the dark shadows encircling her eyes. When she spoke it was in a strange, hollow voice, and her words sounded as if they came from far away.

"Yes—I'm changed," she cried hoarsely. "But—you don't understand—and—you never shall now. I did not think—but it is all no matter. I'm tired—I--I—will you go away, please, and let me rest?"

In a moment she was alone.

Her mother had taken her at her word—had gone away from her without a kiss, without a caress; had gone away from her as she had never gone away in all her life before, and left her to—rest!

She cast herself upon the floor in a passion of grief and despair. She was, oh, so tired, and now—this! And nobody cared—nobody cared! Then with a sudden burst of anger she vowed that, let them think what they would, she would never tell them the truth.

## CHAPTER XX

### WHY DOROTHY WAS GLAD

It is strange how a long night of sleep will change the look of things, and make stern facts seem much less severe than we had thought them to be, and the world altogether much more agreeable.

When Dorothy waked, toward noon of the next day, her frame of mind was quite altered. She still felt wounded and misjudged, but it did not seem to her so impossible as it had done to set herself right with her stepfather and the rest.

For an hour or more after she waked she lay in bed thinking and gazing at the strips of blue sky that stretched beyond her bowed blinds, and going over in her own mind the time that lay between now and that spring day when Miss Lorimer had given her her mother's letter, and she had lashed herself into a fury over the thought of "the interlopers." She

had made a sort of ogre-image "up out of her own head," of them, and she had clung to it in spite of everything ever since. It hadn't been "fair," of course, but in the first place she had decided against them, and that was as far as she had reasoned. She was reasoning further now and she confessed to herself—between throbs of head-ache and a general sense of burning-up-ness—that if she were being misunderstood she had no one to blame but herself. She had gone out of her way to make her stepfather think her unmanageable, perverse, and rude. She had taken a mischievous sort of pleasure in shocking him—or trying to; and in making Helen feel that she "had no use for her." She had deliberately set to work to misrepresent herself, and then she had wondered that she was not understood. She had never tried to be lovable and yet she had expected to be loved.

No, it wasn't fair; in fact, it was downright unjust. Why shouldn't her stepfather have thought hard things of her yesterday when she had declared over and over again in his presence that "she didn't care what any one said, she'd do what she wanted, so there!"

So now he felt that she had been defiantly

"doing what she wanted" when she sang on board the boat.

Doing what she wanted! Good gracious!

The thing that had made the plan seem the right one was the "sacrifice" she'd have to make in order to do it—and she hadn't dreamed, until she was actually there, how much of a sacrifice it would really be.

It was certain sure that however she had felt about Colonel Everest and her stepsister in the beginning, she did not feel so any more. She had tried to make believe at first that she hated them, but she could not deceive herself with stories of that kind any longer. She knew that there was something in her heart that made the thought of Helen's dying an agony, and the idea of her father ever kissing her and calling her "little daughter" a choking joy.

And if that wasn't love—then she'd like to know what it was.

Anyway it was strong enough to batter down all her old pride and make her ready to go to them both and beg to be pardoned and given another chance.

"I'll do it now," she said aloud to herself. "I'll begin all over again if God'll only let me



have another chance and start afresh. Please do, O God; please do! I'll try to be good—only don't let Helen die."

She never thought of praying that her father might be kept from danger. He seemed so big and brave that she never dreamed of death for him.

She got up and dressed herself as quickly as she could, which was not very quickly, for her hands trembled and she felt so altogether queer and shaky that she had to sit down every once in a while to rest, and try to cool her scorching cheeks and hands with cool water from the basin.

Now that she had made up her mind what she meant to do she could hardly wait to do it—and, besides, her heart was thumping so hard with nervous dread at the thought of how she would feel if her father refused to forgive her that it made her feel faint and sick.

She did not stop to "prink" over her hair nor "fuss" about her swollen eyes and burning cheeks, which she told herself were smarting from yesterday's strain of sun and tears—she just bathed and dressed and then went downstairs.

Somehow as she opened her door she felt a

strangeness about the house; a sort of stillness and hush that was not natural. No one was to be seen about, and she hurried down the staircase thinking:

"I've overslept, I guess, and they are all out, or something. Oh, dear! now I'll have to wait and wait, and they mayn't be back for hours."

But after peeping into the living-room and seeing it deserted, and, glancing out upon the veranda and finding that, too, forsaken, she went into the dining-room to forage about for something to eat, for though she was not hungry she thought it must be the lack of food that made her feel so faint.

The dining-room was always kept dim and shadowy between meals so that it might be cool and free from the flies that would manage to squeeze in, in spite of the screens, but notwithstanding the dusk, Dorothy saw Helen going to and fro between the table and the butler's pantry and preparing her breakfast with her own hands.

"Good morning," stammered Dorothy.

"Good morning," returned Helen, softly; but her voice had a catch in it and she turned away—Dorothy did not quite know why.

"I'm awfully late," she broke out uneasily, "I—I'm sorry."

"Oh, no, you're not late—that is for luncheon. But I thought you'd better not wait. I had been listening for you to get up, and when I heard you walking about I came down to get you something to eat. You must be very hungry."

This time Dorothy was sure there were tears in her voice—whatever there might be in her eyes, and she thought, of course she was still grieving over the dress.

She jumped up impulsively before she had fairly sat down, and ran after Helen into the pantry.

"Oh, Helen, Helen, forgive me—please forgive me and love me—if you can," she cried. "I thought it wasn't fair to wear the dress—when I—had been so cruel to—you. Don't think it was—because I didn't love you, Helen. I do—I do! And if you go and die I'll never forgive you as long as I live. If you go and die I'll want to die, too, right away. Oh, Helen, Helen—"

The pantry-door had swung to upon them, and what happened behind it no one ever knew but the girls themselves. But when they came

out some seconds later they were holding hands and Helen was dropping happy tears into Dorothy's oat-meal and Dorothy was so contented that she didn't care.

"And now I want to see my father," she was beginning, when all at once Helen startled her by setting the little dish down upon the table and hiding her face in her hands.

Dorothy stared at her open-mouthed.

"What's the matter?" she gasped, too surprised to feel alarm.

"He's gone," sobbed Helen.

"Gone?"

"Yes."

"What in the world do you mean? Gone? Gone where?"

Helen drew her hand roughly across her eyes and tried to sop up her tears with her poor little drenched handkerchief.

"Why, didn't you know?" she demanded piteously. "Didn't you hear it all last evening? There were telegrams — and things — from Washington. And he had to start right off and — Mr. Beech came and went down to New York to see him off — and we've dreaded it all summer, mamma and I, but we didn't really believe

it would happen—and when the telegrams came I thought I'd die—but he was so brave—and mamma never shed a tear, but I could see she was just suffering and I tried to keep up—but I couldn't—for you know Dorothy, you know—”

“What?” almost shrieked the younger girl, pushing back her coffee untouched and springing to her feet, her face grown set and her body all a tremble with dread from head to foot.

Helen grasped her hand.

“Oh, Dorothy, do you feel sick?” she questioned anxiously. You look as if—”

“Never mind me—tell me about him. Where has he gone? What do I know?”

Helen was almost afraid of her staring eyes. She answered with timid obedience. “He's gone to fight the Indians—they're making trouble—out West—there's been a dreadful outbreak, and they expect worse. And—you know—he may never come back. Indians are so treach—”

But she never finished her sentence, for just then Dorothy's staring eyes closed, she put out her hand as if she were trying to steady herself, and then—down she went in a white little heap upon the floor.

Helen gave a gasp and sank on her knees beside her.

"Mamma!" she shrieked, "Hilda! Christine!"

Her cries rang strangely through the echoing, silent house, and in an instant the dining-room seemed swarming with people.

Mrs. Everest took immediate command. She was very pale and very calm.

"Please carry her into the library, Christine," she said to the buxom cook. "And lay her flat upon the couch. Don't raise her head."

"Hilda, there is a bottle of camphor on my bureau. Get it, please. How did it happen, Helen?"

"Why," wailed the girl, wringing her hands, "I was only telling her about papa's having gone and she just up—I mean down—and fainted. When she first came in I thought she looked queer. Her eyes were so kind of big and shiny, and her cheeks were so red, but I didn't like to say anything for fear she might not like—and then by and by she came into the butler's pantry and cried and went on like anything, and said she loved me and— Oh, mamma, I was so happy, and now, perhaps, she

is really sick and didn't know what she was saying and it isn't true at all."

Her mother made no reply. She was busy watching the color return to Dorothy's white face. It deepened and deepened until her cheeks were a fiery crimson, and when she opened her eyes Mrs. Everest saw at once what Helen had meant. Decidedly the child was not well. Her heart sank as she looked at her. But she did not stop to lament. She hurried upstairs for her little medicine-case, by the aid of whose simple remedies she had so often managed to pilot Dorothy through colds and fevers and indigestions when she was a baby.

"If," she thought, "after a little, her condition doesn't improve I'll send for the doctor. Yesterday was too much for her, poor foolish child!"

As soon as she was fully conscious Dorothy turned her face away and lay quite still and motionless upon her pillow.

She had prayed to God to give her another chance, and now He was showing her that she had delayed too long. She had been too bad to be forgiven, and now He had taken her father away from her without even giving her the

chance to beg the pardon she had been too proud to ask for before; without even letting her explain to him yesterday's mistake. He would never know the truth of it now. Never—never. He would be killed by the Indians and would never know the truth.

Her mother tried to rouse her, while she hadn't the least idea what was really the trouble. But Dorothy could not get rid of the bitter, remorseful thoughts that kept haunting her incessantly, and the more she dwelt on them the heavier grew the hammers that were pounding in her temples and the hotter the coals in the palms of her hands.

Toward evening her mother decided to send for the doctor. She was standing on the veranda giving John directions when she saw Mr. Beech's carriage coming briskly up the drive. Her heart gave a leap in spite of its double heavy load, for now she would get news of her husband; the first in—who knew how long a time.

"I'm a special messenger," cried Mr. Beech, laughingly, tossing the ribbons to his man and leaping to the ground. "I have two particular errands to perform. One for you and one for



little Miss Dorothy. May I begin the first by begging you to spare me a minute or two alone?"

Mrs. Everest led him silently into the cool living-room, where they both sat down.

"Now to begin at the beginning," said her guest. "I came here last night for the purpose of explaining a certain important matter to Colonel Everest that it was necessary he should understand at once. But, as you remember, I found him on the point of starting for the West, and in the hurry and confusion of leave-taking, it was impossible for me to detain him. Therefore I took the liberty of going to New York with him and saying what I had to say on the way. What I told him he has commissioned me to tell you."

Mrs. Everest looked at him with eager interest.

Mr. Beech cleared his throat and began to fumble nervously with his watch-guard.

"Perhaps you know that I was with your husband yesterday, when—on the 'Mollie Elwell.' He has probably told you all about the affair. Well, of course, I said nothing to any one, not even to my wife, because he had desired it, and I thought, too, it was best to hush it up.

But a little while after I got home, my wife was called away to see some one, and while she was gone I couldn't help wondering if, after all, it was quite fair to give your poor little girl the cut direct.

"Well, I was getting pretty uneasy over it all, when my wife came back; and Mrs. Everest, you should have seen her! I couldn't think what ailed her, for she isn't one to show much emotion unless she's deeply touched. I asked her what it was all about, and then came a long story that put quite another face on the boat affair."

He reminded Mrs. Everest briefly of his wife's call at Adelhurst, when she had suggested that the girls earn some money for the hospital fund by a "sacrifice," and of Dorothy's eager desire to do so.

"Elaine says," Mr. Beech went on, "that she remembers that she heard Dorothy say at the time she could not do anything but sing and play on the banjo, and she herself suggested her going about doing both for pennies, thinking nothing more about it after it was said, and not having the faintest shadow of an idea that the whole thing would be more than a sort of spur

to the girls in getting the money together. But when she was told that some one wanted to see her last night ; when she found that ' some one ' was Dorothy ; and when, moreover, she saw the child was ready to faint with exhaustion, she was somewhat taken aback, and was quite unnerved when Dorothy poured a pocketful of money into her lap, explaining that it was her contribution to the hospital, and that, as my wife had recommended, she had earned it.

" Elaine naturally asked how she had earned it, but Dorothy would not answer. All she said was :

" ' I earned it honestly, Mrs. Beech. You needn't be afraid to take it. I couldn't embroider—I should have spoiled it, but I—it was a sacrifice ! ' Then the poor little soul hid her face in her hands, and left my wife standing by the doorway, too much taken aback to even call her and have her taken home in the carriage to save her tired feet the extra tramp.

" Of course, Elaine was all at sea regarding the means Dorothy had used to get the money ; but when I had heard her story I thought you wouldn't mind if I enlightened her. For, of course, that was what she collected the money

for. I wish now I'd given her a five-dollar bill instead of a one—poor little girl.”

He broke off with a great shrug of his shoulders and coughed until Mrs. Everest thought he would never stop.

“That girl’s a trump,” he blurted out at last, as he rose to go.

Her mother smiled wistfully. She could not take it all in just yet, but she wanted to get back into the library, and she did not urge Mr. Beech to stay, though she felt very ungrateful for not doing so.

“Dorothy is not at all well,” she explained. “She has a high fever, and I am afraid yesterday was too much for her.”

“Well, I have something in my pocket that I think will do her good,” replied her companion cheerfully, diving into his breast pocket and bringing out a white envelope. “It’s from her father. He sent his love to all of you, and bade me tell you that, God willing, he will soon be home again.”

He handed her the envelope, and in a moment more was gone.

Mrs. Everest had hardly been able to control her happiness before him, but now she

flew across the hall and into the library as if she had wings upon her feet.

"Dorothy!" she cried joyously, forgetting the girl's fever—everything—but her own gladness, and flourishing the envelope high above her head. "See what Mr. Beech has brought you. Open it, open it, darling, and see what it says."

But Dorothy did not care what it said. It was probably from Mrs. Beech about the tournament—or the money. She shook her head and turned her face away. She had no interest in such things now."

"Shall I read it to you, pussy?"

No answer, but a nod.

Mrs. Everest tore open the envelope and read:

"My darling little daughter:"

"What?"

"It's from papa, Dorothy," cried Helen, growing pale with excitement and joy, but Dorothy was sitting bolt upright and brushing her hair savagely away from her ears as if she had not heard aright.

"My darling little daughter," repeated her mother. "I have but a few moments before the train starts, but I cannot go away without say-

ing that with all my heart I beg you to forgive me. I was under a wrong impression yesterday, and I acted in error. I know that the generous little heart that bore so much for charity's sake will not refuse to give me its pardon.

“‘And when I come home—as God grant I may do soon—we must “kiss and be friends,” as the children say. In the meantime there will not be an hour in the day when I shall not be thinking of my three dear ones; “the girls I’ve left behind me,” and praying the good Father to keep them for me, safe and well, and to bring us together again.

“‘The bell is ringing. Good-bye, my own dear little girl.

“‘Your loving

“‘FATHER.’”

For a moment there was silence.

Then Dorothy stretched out her hot hand for the letter and pressed it jealously to her cheek as if it were the dearest thing in the world to her.

“I’m glad—I’m glad,” was all she could say, but there was no need for more just then.

And when the real time came, and she was

caught up into the dear, strong arms, and hugged close to the dear, strong heart, the same strange sort of dumbness held her tongue, and all she could do was to cling about her father's neck and say the same words over:

"I'm glad! I'm glad!"

THE END





